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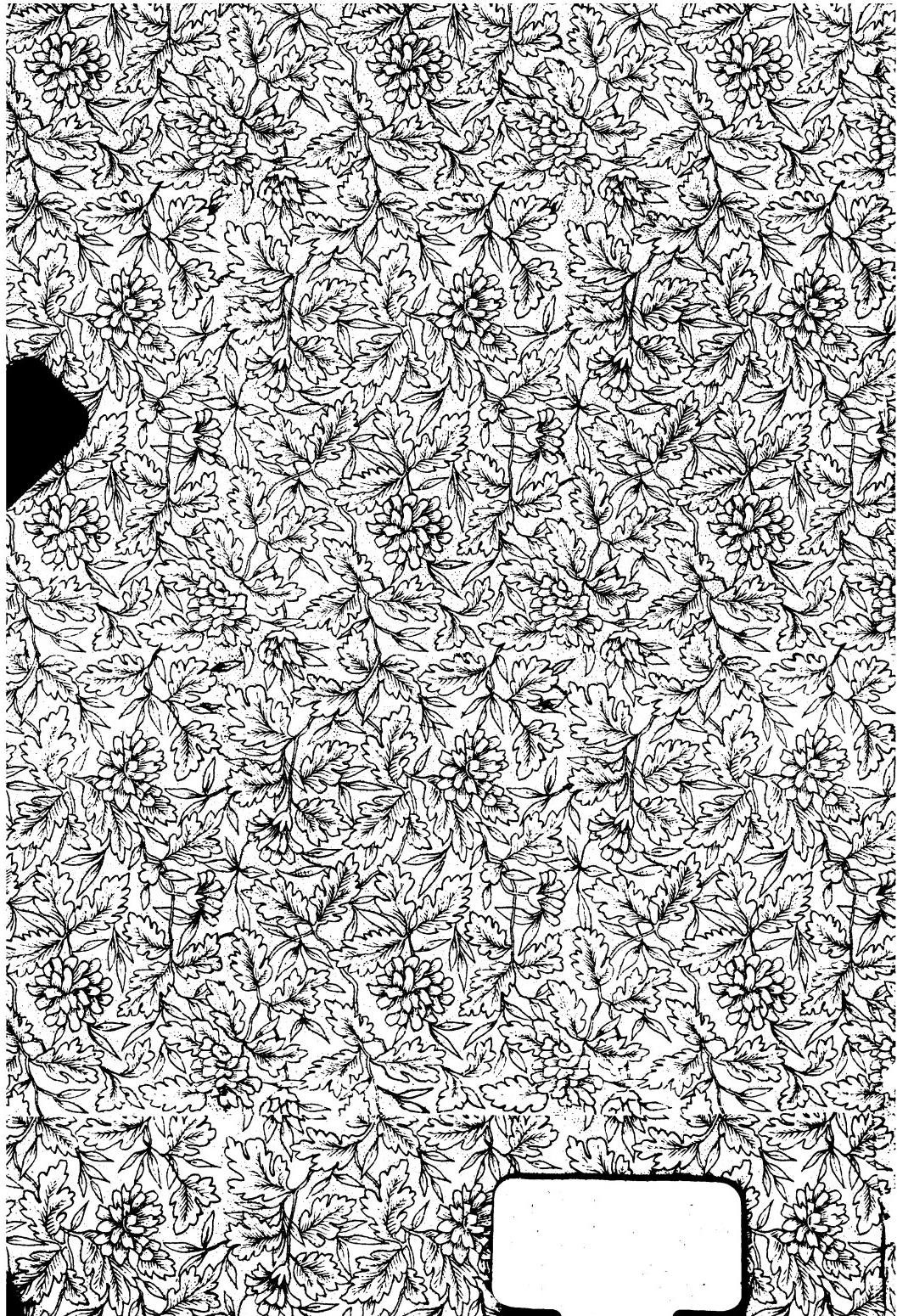
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MONTE ROSA

THE EPIC OF AN ALP

BY

STARR HOYT NICHOLS.

SECOND EDITION—MUCH REVISED.

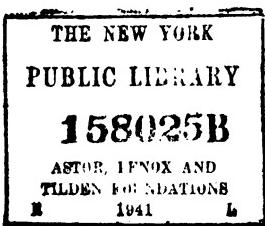


NEW YORK & CHICAGO:
BELFORD, CLARKE & CO.

1886.

R.B.P.

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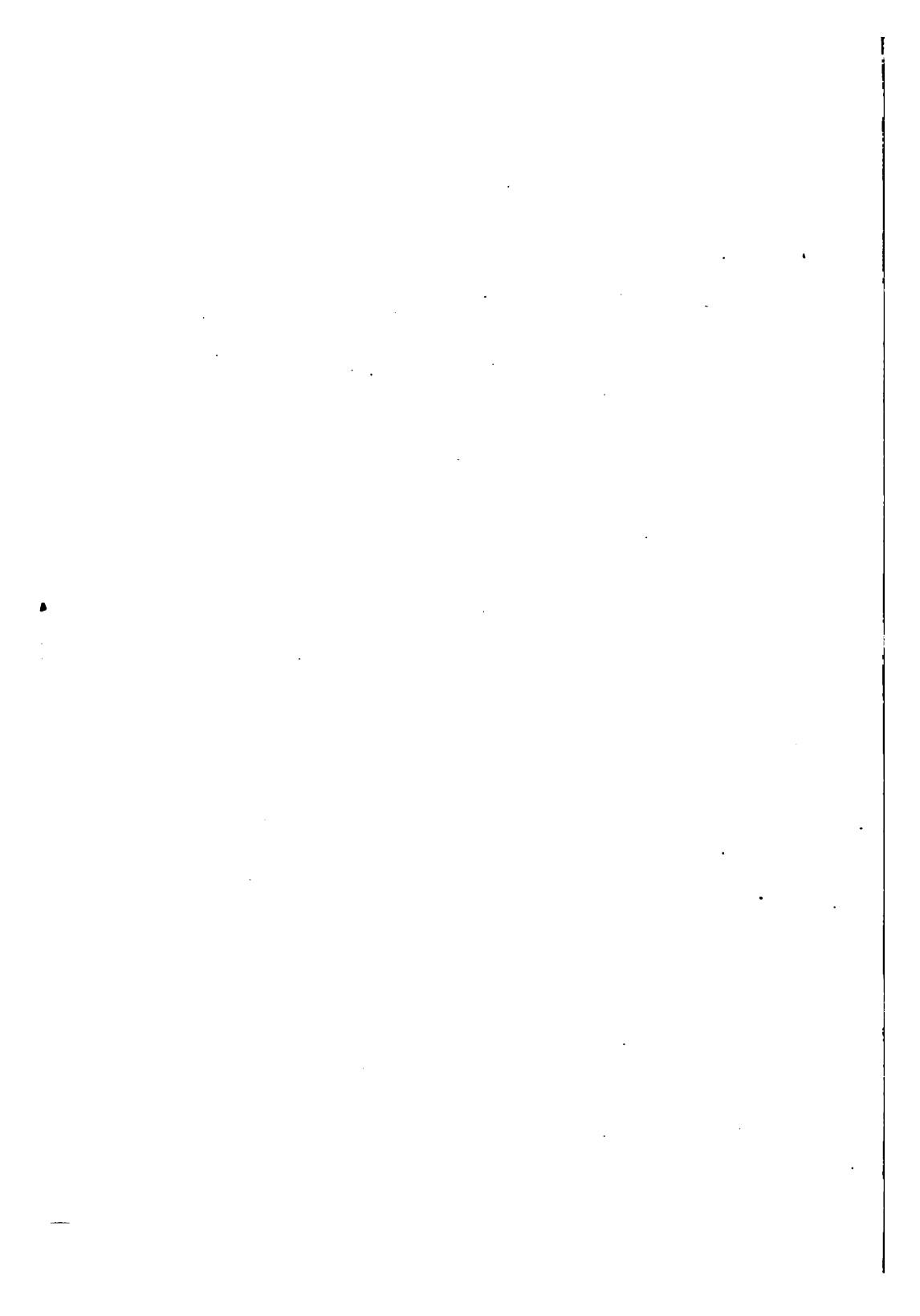
To

MY BELOVED WIFE,

FOR WHOSE PLEASURE THIS PUBLICATION WAS BEGUN—

FINISHED, ALAS ! TOO LATE.

WILLIAM C. STERLING



To S. H. N.

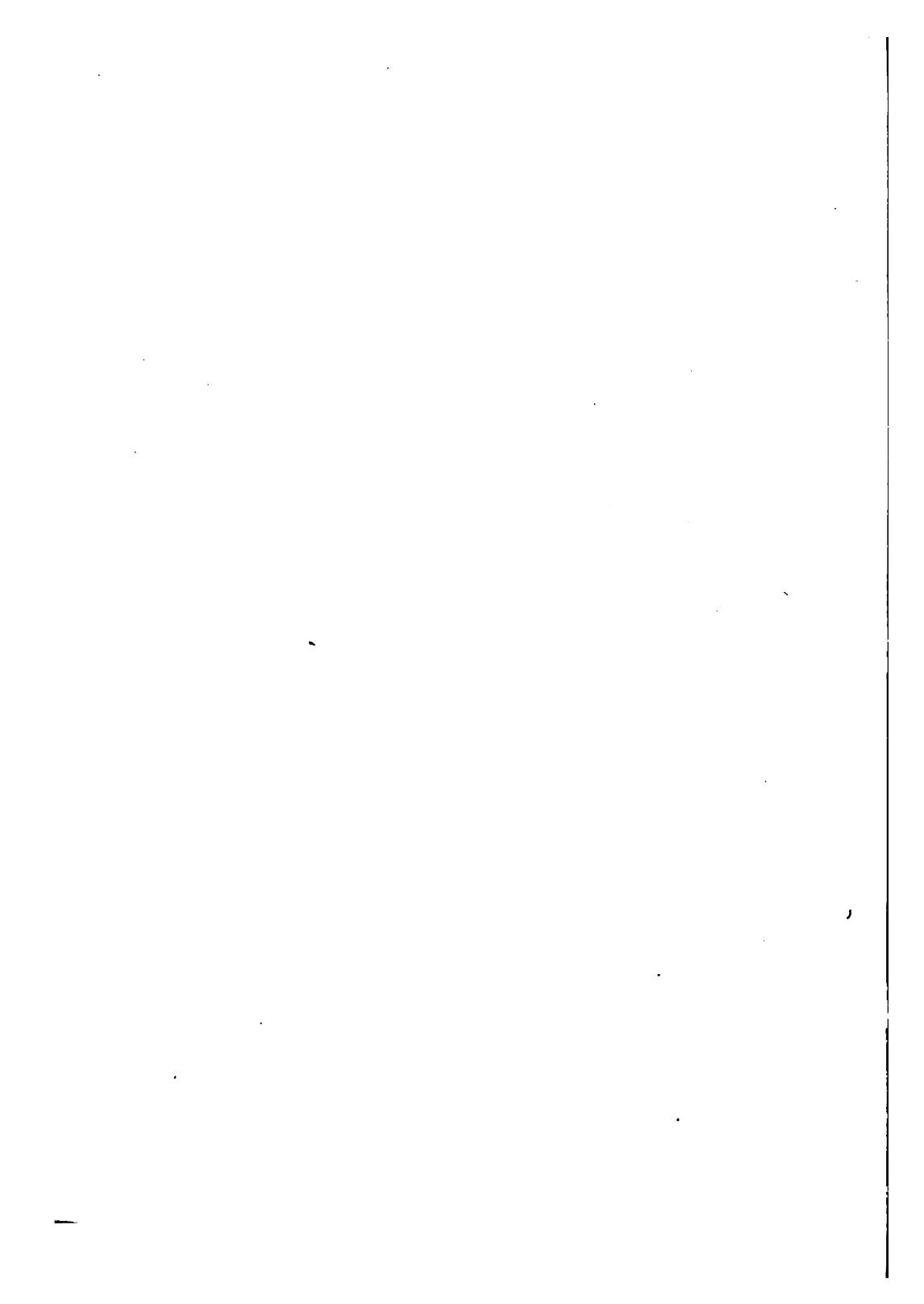
IDEAL REALISM.

In englised majesty by thee expressed
Our Mother Nature rules and lives again
That universal housewife whom no pain
Moves from her method, nor love's fond request.
Her riotous wooers who consent would wrest
From this all-wise Penelope remain
Unheeded of her infinite disdain ;
She waits the lord of truth who brings the best.

In aging worlds as when revolved their youth,
Who subtile Nature's inmost heart would win,
Her outward self must question nor gainsay
The word disclosed ; then shall he lift the thin
Translucent veil that parts the strainless play
Of natural forces from supernal truth.

L. D.

CAMBRIDGE, Mass.,
January 14th, 1883.



P R E F A C E .

THE favor which MONTE ROSA received on its first appearance at the hands of critics and the public, has induced the author to prepare a new edition. In doing so he has availed himself of many opinions and endeavored to remedy such defects as were noticed. He has also made other changes both in the words and thought of the Poem in the hope of improving its quality. His aim has been to make the language more vivid and the thought more lucid.

He has re-written some passages, as the Matterhorn tragedy, the adventure in the crevasse, the close of the last section, and several portions in the section 'With Nature,' besides recasting other divisions to an indefinite extent and adding an episode to 'Milan.'

'The Epic of an Alp' denotes the Poem truly as the 'Epos,' the word, narrative, cycle of the mountain beginning with its birth, describing its form, appearance, grandeur, its relations to man in 'the Ascent and Descent' physically, and to man metaphysically in the part 'With Nature.' The work ends with the probable ending of the mountain. As it began in a way with the formation of the world and man, so it closes with a glimpse at the course and termination of both. Some find this gloomy; but what can one do? The author is not dealing with fictitious characters or fairy tales. Even poets would strive in vain against the natural order of the solar system.

Those who allege that the attempt to wed science to poetry will always end in failure, may possibly be out of the drift of things. Is not the framework of the universe poetic in essence? Its beauties and grandeurs surpass the most delicate of the most sublime of merely human conceptions. That the material is less flexible than the mythologies which have served poets for ages is possibly owing to its newness. May not time soften and mold it to graceful uses? The mythologies will always remain charming; but the mature world will ask to have its powerful and various knowledge also reduced to attractive verse. The wonders of nature are rich and inexhaustible, and worked in with human fortunes and human fate may open a mine of poetry far surpassing the old childish legends and superstitions. Truth is beautiful as well as true and may eventually borrow all the hues of imaginative thought. Is not Shakspere the most poetical, partly because the most realistic and exact of writers?

The new edition is published in the hope that its changes may be found to be improvements.

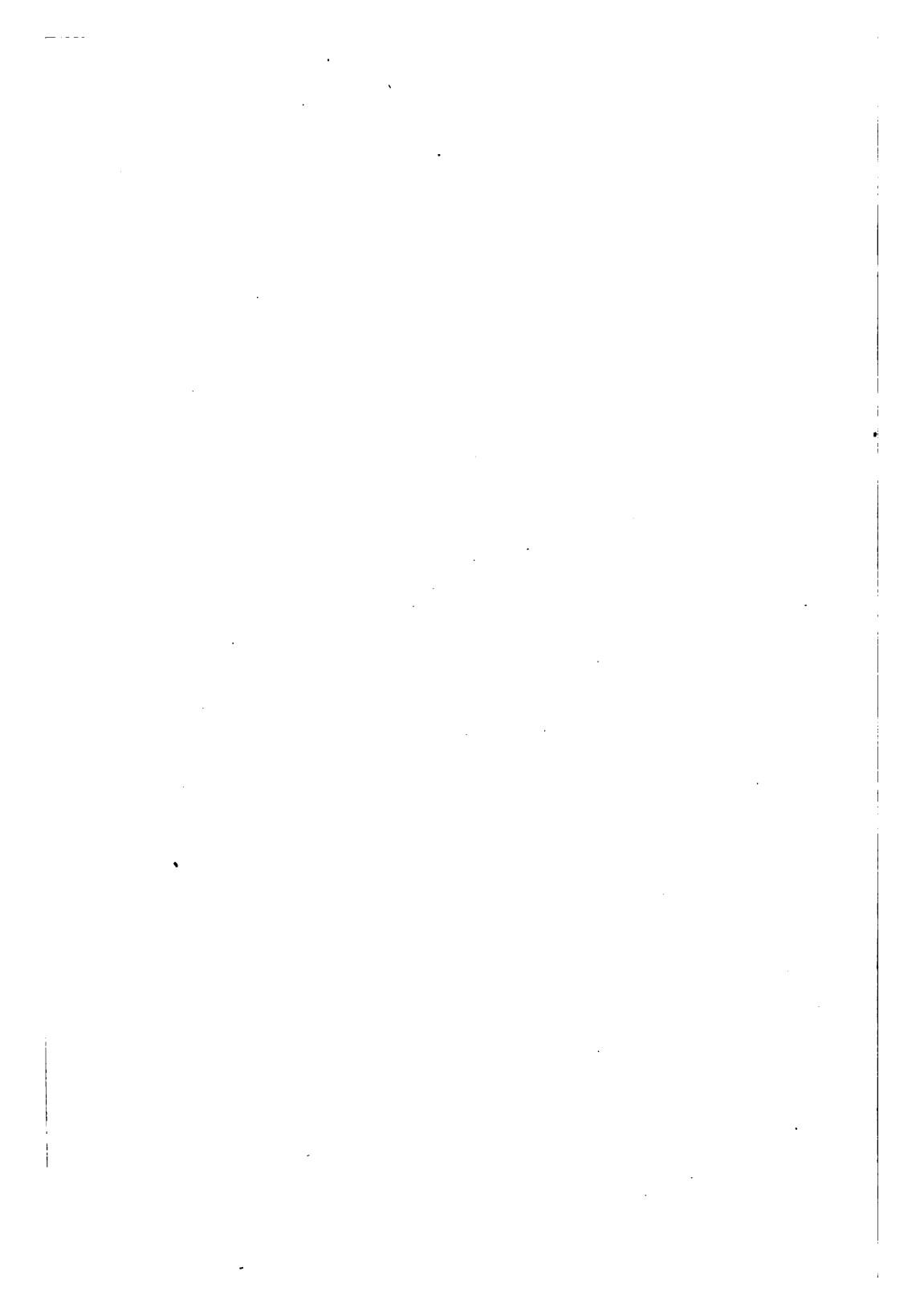
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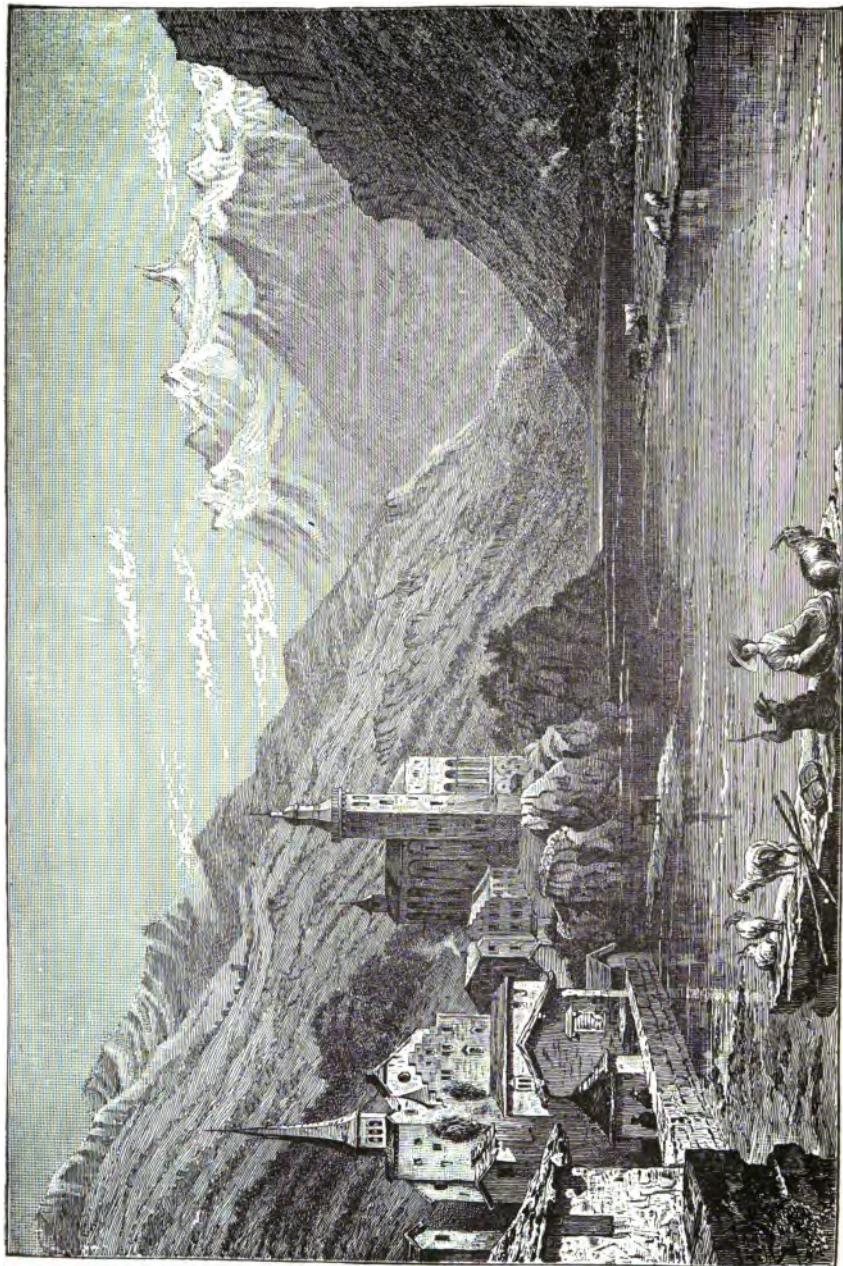


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P.

L



MONTE ROSA.

MONTE ROSA.

I.

ZERMATT.

By the long ranges of Valaisian Alps
That crowd the narrowed skies with majesty,
Where hoarsely cries the new-born river Wisp
Within its valley-cradle, old Zermatt
Low-lying in a streamy gorge receives
The guest of Nature to her fastnesses.
To its seclusion deep as if wide seas
Spread silver silence round its solitude,
Devoutly gather as to healing shrines
Far-traveled pilgrims leaning on their staves,
To exalt their hearts amid sublimities.

Like statues of pale marble, Titan-tall
And calm in Titan strength the snowy peaks
O'ergaze the lowlier vales. Their lifted brows
Confront the arch of heaven on equal terms ;
Their grisly flanks record the tread of years

Whose path winds down from dim eternities ;
Their hoary heads wrapped in white silence brood
Like great defeated heroes, somberly
Upon the harsh disasters whose rude hands
Have checked their fiery and unfearing youth,
And trimmed them to this bleared antiquity.
Old gray-beards ! Do they still recall perchance
The revelries of earlier days of yore,
When the tough-layered planet rent its folds,
And burnt its rocky bands like tow in twain,
Rocked all its coasts with earthquake, roared with storm
And with volcanic torches ringed its skies,
While all the elements joined merry war,
Their moods being wilder and their forces young ?

Time-born, time-worn, yet still outwearing time,
How are these heralds in their eld content
To stand dumb vouchers of those stirring times ?
How thus to play the pedagogue and teach
To younger tribes of men the curious lore
Of cosmic change through chemic mysteries,
Of fierce attractions and repulsions strange,
That sported dolphin-like in fluid stone,
What time our bubble-globe first fell from sun ?
How last the aging Earth, her hot youth spent,
Convulsively drew close her stiffened frame,
And shriveling like a beldame cowered about
The waning heap of unreplenished fires ?
What lines of wretchedness then scarred her face !
What wrinkles scored the ever-cruel hours !



How like a surging ocean, high and wide
Rose the rough billows of deforming rock
In measureless confusion sprawled abroad !

And still the unrelenting years ran on,
True wandering Jews, whose restless journeying
Left fossil footprints on each trampled ridge,
And softly hewed the cliffs, till here were cloven
The sundered peaks, divided widely separate
By deepening gorges till the sculptured crests
Stood glorious o'er their valleys like young gods
Fresh-fallen from high Olympus ; such great Jove
Might set to sentinel a threatened land.

But who the sculptors whose all-potent hands
Once chiseled out this giant statuary ?
What Titan, Demon, raging Demigod,
Brawny Artificer, loosed his huge strength
Upon these ridges, and drove crashing through
The iron barriers of these rended crags ?
How scarped the precipice, and with what shards
Battered the adamant, or ploughed the rock
With these profound ravines, and left torn tracts
Of such colossal chaos, frozen storm,
The work and symbol of demoniac wrath ?
And then what artist lawless yet all law,
Carved out the shapely peaks above the clouds,
And lent such grandeur to their savagery ?

Who ? Who indeed ? Nor Titan, Demon, God

Wrought here ; no angry Vulcan with his sledge,
No hundred-armed Briareus storming heaven,—
No furious Dwarf from lurid Jotunheim,
No thought-distilling brain, nor maddened will
Unleashed their forces on these shattered cliffs.
No ! nor no workman's drill rang on their sides,
No clanking enginery drove tempered steel,
Nor blade, nor hammer split their welded sands,
Nor artist's chisel wrought the towering crests.

But architect and craftsman both was he
That all things terrene rules, the immortal Sun
That like high God toils ever weariless,
Not taking Sabbath, not desiring rest,
Nor sparing time, but squandering like a prince
The golden millions of his myriad years.
He having moulded earth a little star
From fiery mist and immemorial time,
And bent her planetary circle true,
Commissioned servants to complete her orb.
The cloud he beckoned forth from hollow sea
And charged with shower ; the winds, his couriers
He gave freebooter's license for all years ;
The ice was his forbearance, and hale heats
His unreined strength ; while frenzied lightnings struck
With borrowed hammer of his radiance forged ;
For Lord of lords is he, and elements
Must fetch and carry as his utter slaves.
So here he put these untaught serfs to task
Like strolling journeyman chance-found and hired,

Or rough day-laborers careless of their wage
A paltry mob of idlers, vagabonds,
Rash and uncouth mechanics, lunatic,
Guiltless of plan, whose sloven art made light
Of line and square and compass' puny rule,
Who laughed at pains and scorned the score of hours.
The fickle shower flew headlong at the ridge,
Pelting all ways; the snow-flakes' plumy troop
With innocent weakness brushed its stony face;
Weak streamlets halting feebly down the rock
Etched outline furrows, beds of streams to be;
The robber strong-winds rode on endless raids;
The crafty frost drove his thin wedges home
In scar and seam; the lightning's random sledge
Smote blows of Thor on every eminence;
The ponderous glaciers pushed their awkward planes
Wherever plane would run; and daily fell
The dash—the soft, innumerable dash
Of the sun-waves' foamless surf, in which the stone
As gently broke as break the close-sealed buds
Of dauntless violets, when roaring March
Hunts pallid winter from the greening fields.
These vagrant workmen with light touch and strong,
Drove at the fire-tried rock as if for sport,
Nor cared a whit when grandeurs unforeseen
Began to grow beneath their frolic hands;
But wantonly they dashed about the crests,
Flew down each gorge, swept every ledge, and stroked
The dreadful precipice familiarly,—
Children of cloud and air that took no thought,

Yet in good time fulfilled their due, and set
Their antique nobleness upon the peaks,
And flung the snows about them for a robe,
Armored their cones in ice impregnable,
And showed their whiteness on the vaulted blue
For one spare hour of geologic time;
Dumb witnesses to our disdainful day
Of what was doing on earth ere man had come
To see.

And that unlettered time slipped on,
Saw tropic climes invade the polar rings,
Then polar cold lay waste the tropic marge;
Saw monster beasts emerge in ooze and air,
And run their race and stow their bones in clay;
Saw the bright gold bedew the elder rocks,
And all the gems grow crystal in their caves;
Saw plant wax quick and stir to moving worm,
And worm move upward reaching towards the brute;
Saw brute by habit fit himself with brain
And startle earth with wondrous progeny;
Saw all of these and still saw no true man.
For man was not, or still so rawly was
That as a little child his thoughts were weak,
Weak and forgetful and of nothing worth,
And Nature stormed along her changeful ways
Unpictured, undescribed the while man slept
Infolded in his germ, or with fierce brutes
Himself but brutal waged a pigmy war,
Unclad as they and with them housed in caves,
Nor knew that sea retired or mountain rose.



THE WEISSHORN.

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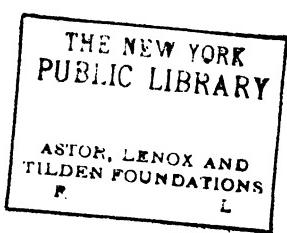
So later, men as they crept down this vale
Following the pasture-lands along the Wisp
But found the peaks each in his self-made place,
Nor dreamed of that strange making how it sped,
But saw two high-embattled ranges face to face,
Between whose storm-exchanging squadrons wound
The streamy, echoing gorge where river Wisp
Blows his complaining trumpet loud and shrill.
There sat they down—a pious tribe of Swiss,
A care-bewildered folk in petty fields,
Who oft spoke ill of hills—their frequent bane,
But built Zermatt beneath them, and made homes.

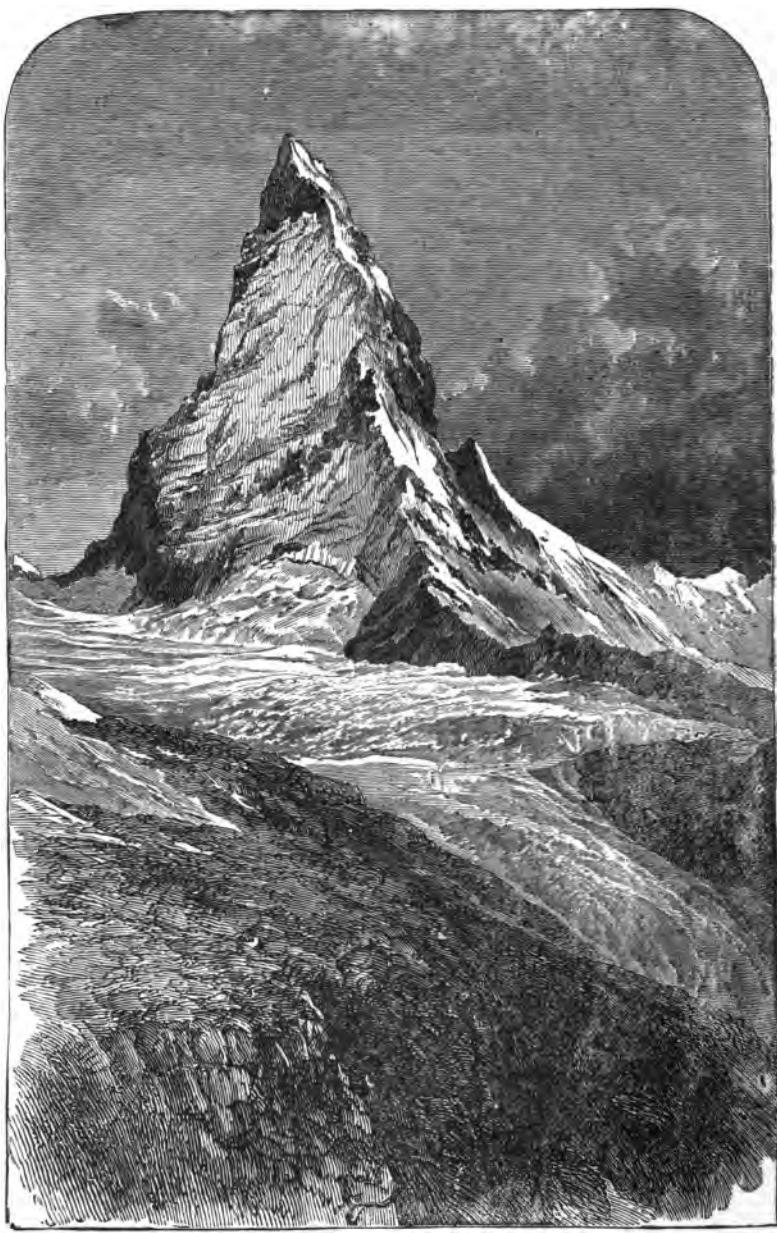
These peaks they found and slowly found them dear,
Long since become thrice-dear to mountaineers
Who daring Death to tourney on their flanks,
And giving him choice of lances sometimes won
Their knightly spurs upon them and were crowned.

Freakish their names,—the peasant's freak or fact,
And each a Giant christens, one superb,
Whose Atlantean port in other land
Would reign in legend and the praise of song;
Names thick with consonants uncouth of sound,
That make scant music in the beat of verse;
Stockhorn, broad Rympfishhorn, and Strahlhorn tall,
And Allah-lin yclept of Saracens
In their brave days when Allah lent his grace
To Moslem sabering Christians 'neath these heights;
Successes: the buckleved crown of Alphubel

Hard-dinted by the unweariable storms;
Then four slant towers of shaggy Mischabel
Highest mid high; with more, inferior peaks;
Like Nubian slaves in burnous glistering white,
Their cliffs rise blackly, arabesqued with snows
To shine immaculate in upper light.
Each free and proud as were all heaven his own;
Like Nubian slaves their feet in chains below
Spurn vainly at those mighty buttresses,
Whose brutal granite scarce permits the lea.

Confronting these across that rock-bound gorge
Cut by the rasping Wisp's long energy,
A rival range exalts superior peaks;
For on Cyclopean shoulders of hard shale,
Whose unhealed scars betray time's awful strife,
Vast Weisshorn's slaty pyramid—so vast
That were all Egypt's build from its large flank
Out-quarried, 't would no diminution show—
In stony strength uprears its triple walls
Above all rivals, and with jewels set
In sparkling glacier decks the breast of heaven.
How long a surly tyrant mocking each approach
He held bleak spaces of thin air alone!
Till restless Tyndall of his grandeurs fain
Challenged his cloudy terrors, saw and braved
His fierce perpetual rain of falling stones,
Ill-hearted winds, and false snow-cornices—
Braved all, and all out-braving, all o'ercame;
Then light of foot deflowered the virgin snow,





That slenderly leaps into kindred cloud
From the slim tip, its last of mortal earth.

Next this, the Moming lifts his beamy spear
As flashing steel upon the vassal clouds ;
And polished ivory with cool sunshine swept
Dent Blanche's stainless cone, a trophy-tusk
Of some huge saurian out-torn in play
By some primeval Anak's recklessness ;
Near Schallhorn's slighter grace, rough Gäbelhorn,
And Dent d'Herens, with guard of thorny spurs
Beneath their melting, never-melted snows.

Then swimming on the vision, bold and large
The monolith of hermit Matterhorn,
Lean anchorite of mountains, nakedly
Exposed to all the spite of wrathful heavens ;
A gaunt Stylites on his pillar gray
That in scarped precipice emerges sheer
From wide unfriendly glaciers desolate ;
An obelisk rough-hewn—grave Nature's sport—
Such as some moody genius of the Gnomes,
Some swift impatient Angelo of Elves,
Plying his furious hammer on the stone
Might thus have battered lamely out, and left
Like Medicean tombs, half finished, twice sublime.
How glooms the austere bareness of his pile !

How like the resting Hercules he stands,
Dark face, and head o'er-bent as if his thoughts

Revived an angry memory ! Reflects
He thus perhaps on that late day which broke
On seven stout cragsmen half-way up the side
Of his stark rock, where like seven ants they crept
Step linking step and scaled the impossible cliff?
Cleared now a beetling corner, now a gulf,
Now breasted up a precipice, now dodged
An avalanche of missiles, rocks and ice,
And still bore upward hand and foot engaged,
With hot excitement as they mounted higher,
And neared the unconquered crest ? Full
Bright and cool the day that took no heed
Of these or any man but let all wag
About their chosen industries as each had mind.
But in those moving figures climbing there
Was fever'd exultation. For as they turned
The mountain's brow and saw the slanting reach
Of his blunt summit, one great thrill of joy
And triumph shot along their nerves, as one
Great cheer they sent against the sunny dome,
And planted glorious foot upon the top
Where ne'er before the tread of man had fallen.

What gratulation, rapture mad, what pride !
As looking downward on the Italian side
They saw a rival party struggling hard,
And threw them shouts and victory-telling stones,
And saw them flee to spread the idle tale
That spirits held the keep of Matterhorn.
How riotous was each as in the beaded wine

They drank their famed exploit! How swelled their hearts

As they began descending strong and glad!

Such wild exultant men had never matched

A headlong cliff,—never such frightful feat

Achieved; high reared their pride, as now they tied

Themselves with alpine rope in one long line

To ensure the hard return. Wary their steps,

Since such descents out-risk the toilsome climb.

But all went well, for many a rood all well,

Till Hadow slipped, and striking Croz the guide

Who led, full in the body, drove him headlong down

With Hudson next and Douglas in his turn,

Since smooth as glass the crag, and all the four

Dashed on like some great boulder volleying wild,

All straining on the line, their last frail hope,

Till that snapped suddenly and let all go

All four, all helpless, struggling, sprawling, vain,

Like four strong swimmers down Niagara's plunge,—

Four goodly men, four mortal pangs, four ruined lives!

Wide spread their fluttering hands across the ledge

In frantic clutches vainly wandering,

Till o'er the pitiless and deathful brink

Of utter precipice they dropped like lead

A thousand quivering fathoms down, the while

The hoarse air murmured in their dying ears;

While Whymper, head and soul o' the enterprise,

With two daft guides above the parted rope

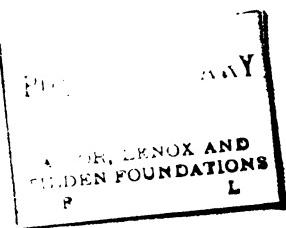
Stood lone spectators of the tragedy,

Piteous and frozen with horror, all their glee
And pride of winning in one instant lost,
As those made end—a grievous end untimely.
Young, bold and strong, but in their strength surprised
They knew no more of youth or pleasing time.

Then heard one from hoar Matterhorn a sound,
Perhaps dull thunder, or perhaps he said,
“ They thought to tame me for their venturous sport,
Me that so long have thrust the clinging snows
From my intolerant sides ; they know at last,
Poor fools too bold ! what terrors haunt the crest
Of lordly Matterhorn ; what vengeance sits
Upon his iron precipice to strike
The bold intruder down through heaven ; ye gods !
Should I be trampled like a common clay,
Made a mere dunghill for the boastful feet
Of these unmannered mortals ? I that here
So long have chiefed it o'er my mates, the one
Invincible, Achilles of the peaks ?
Sooner may my storm-begetting rock be rent,
Or by the earthquake gulfed, my cloudy head
Dust-humbled and forgot in drifting sands,
Than my proud crest allow such midget-swarms
Amid my eagles. Let them perish all
Who dare bold pranks against my majesty.”

Then scarcely shook his flank, less than his sides
Some fly-tormented elephant, and down
The adventurers plunged to such quick death as came.





Yet like the heroes in sharp battle hurt
Who shout their triumph while life ebbs away,
Perchance these cragsmen kept their souls of fire
And as they ploughed the unsupporting air
In thought exulted o'er the conquered peak.
“ But we have won his honors, scalped his pride,
Old braggart ! did he think all-conquering man
Would never tap that forehead with his heel ?
Then we have spoiled his phantasy, and more
Will follow to re-stamp our conquest.

“ Rash ? ”

But what had we to do with cautions here ?
Sons of bold fathers, we had felt their strain.
And if we fell, and falling died, why so
Have brave men died before in hot pursuit
Of that which fled them, leaving whitened bones
To warn all cowards off from courage. Heavens !
The brave may taste of death too soon, but still
Dastards live not forever. We have dared
And won and—lost ; but now we dedicate
This heaven-kissing rock, our monument ;
And what great king or warrior world-renowned
Can have a greater ? We shall lie content.”

But was the achievement worth the sacrifice ?
Who knows ?

Bold manhood grasps the globe since still
The meek inherit not the earth. Courage
That of cold Prudence her advices takes

Were but a Quaker captain ; life gives the palm
To other, martial leaders. These slain men
Came of a race whose drum-beat belts the globe,
Because rash daring sits upon their swords ;
Because they browbeat danger, run all risks
To get their way ; blench not to hunt the Pole,
To beard the rude barbarian in his swamps,
Cow mobs, curb tyrants, bully superior force,
Dare hunger, wounds, adversities, and hates,
Carrying rude England to the world's confines ;
But dread no ill except ill-fame deserved.
Of such a breed the insolent youth will hunt
Death's lair to try their mettle laughingly,
And say, "Enough of us are born to spare
A waste in heroes ; let their names like gems
Bound on the withering forehead of the time
Flash some faint lustre to the latest age.
Are not men many, shining deeds but few?"

But why delay with men ? Great mountains call.
For now we hail the central Alpine group
That stands far-gazing on the battlements
Of that tremendous wall, which, like a bruised
And rearing dragon, trails its scaly length
From sovran Blanc to somber Engadine,—
There stands in princely old pre-eminence ;
Its steely Titans,—each grand head unbent
As Titans were while Jove was still a child
Nor yet had rained his ruin on their heads—
Arrest the Wispach valley and shut in

Zermatt's brown roofs with lines impregnable ;
Then stretching cordial hands snow-gauntleted
To either rival chain forenamed weld all
In one colossal horseshoe—print of Mars' steed—
Bent round through miles of melancholy crag.

And here the Alpine monarchs mass their force,
Kings all and like great kings companionless.
Breithorn the first, his bold, obtrusive brow
Thatched thick with snows that whitely overhang
The swarthy face of his scarred precipices ;
Castor and Pollux next, twin births of Time,
Old ere their Grecian counterparts were young ;
But were the well-greaved Grecians ever clad
In brighter harness than their shirts of sleet ?
Then mightier Lyskamm, Coryphæus huge
Whose elephantine shoulders lightly bear
The cloud-gleaned harvest of a century's snows ;
And last the Monte Rosa, whose tall spires
The sun first gilds when golden morning dawns
And far Orion through slow-rolling night
Descries as nearest to his seven-fold stars.

II.

THE MOUNTAIN.

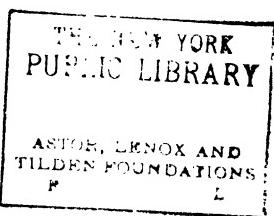
MONTE ROSA, queen of that large court of kings,—
Reigning but ruling not, since each is sole,—
In all-surpassing splendor keeps high state
Unceasingly; about her pillared throat
She twines a mantle of caressing snow
Wind-rippled with grotesque embroideries,—
A cloth-of-silver robe drawn spotlessly
Along her ample shoulders whence it falls
In mazy folds and wrinkles infinite;
Now clinging close revealing vaguely clear
The massive undulations of her form
As 'neath its marble dress a statue's limbs;
Now sporting off in puffs and flowerless wreaths,
Such as the fences card from winter flaws;
Then freaking on, her snows become a whirl
Of draperies—a fleecy cataract
Caught back on ledge and scaur, copes of satin sleet
In cascades of disorder fluttering down
And tossed in sparkling rapids slashed with foam
Tempestuously about her feet; so clothe
Her mountain ruggedness and kindly veil
The ravages of nothing-sparing Time
Beneath a starry sheen of woven dews.

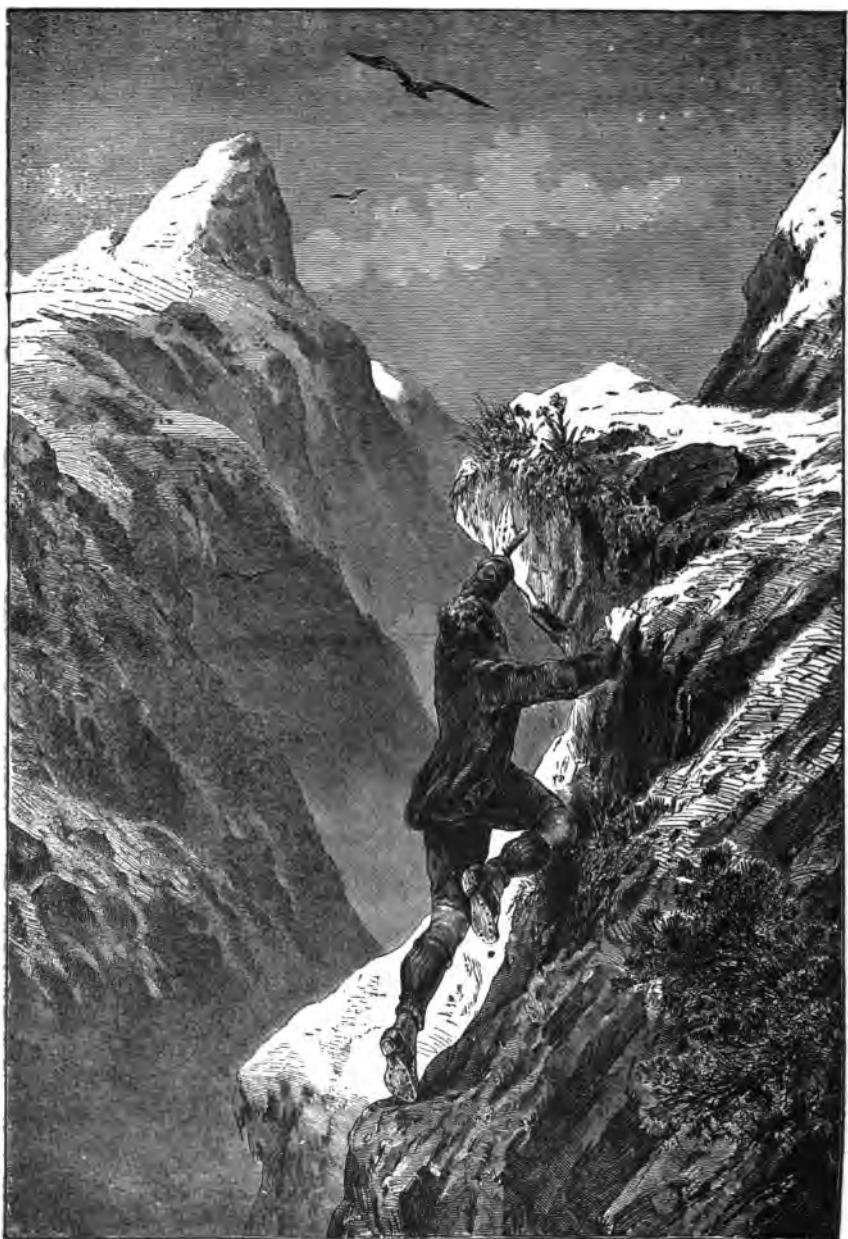
From Switzerland the Mount escapes the vale
In gentle slopes no rare height promising,—
Like rustic lad that setting out from home
His coming exaltation not forecasts,—
But soon puts on a more aspiring strain
And swells in swift-succeeding waves its sharp ascent
Of stony ridges; like a tumbling surge
When freshening breezes heap it wave on wave,
Arch springs from arch in boldly growing curve;
Then presently subdues its hurried rise
As breathless with the pace, and stays awhile
Where swirls of confluent glacier ease the grade;
But next abruptly from the glacial plain,
Like some Cologne cathedral's cliff of gray
O'er the mean huts of petty villagers,
Upsprings its central mass in tortured walls
Of storm-corroded crag, oft channeled through
And fissured into motley precipice
By the descending glaciers' heavy flow;
Here tower the cliffs in Gothic savagery
To heights announcing their insatiate pride
And scornful purpose bearing in strong arms
A large plateau where trackless snow-plains lie
Swept with the plenteous sunshine, tranquilly
As fields Elysian trod of weightless feet;
There dip long-drifted swales whose restless curves
Capricious bend in tempest-moulded lines;
Where windless dells, smooth-floored with sifted snows,
Couch trustfully beneath the shaggy brows
Of sheltering crag,—dells fit for cloistered souls

To cool sweet passion with austerities ;
Succeed new cliffs again whose pinnacles
Brook not the ermine of pomp-lending snows,—
But like tall pines that from sun-starved ravines
Extend their avid tops to beg day's gold,
Strain tensely on as if the unrivaled pitch,
The topless elevation still were naught,
And still to rise were easy, since no thought
Of halt, no trace of weariness intrudes,
But even gravitation spent of breath
Seems left for dead below; and all sublimed
In one vast lift and mighty bulk and heap
Of rock and earth snow-vested all the year.
Then peerlessly two slender tapering spires
In dainty grace salute the sky and crave
His company.

So gradually gains

The aspiring Mount its vantage o'er the Swiss ;
But bluffs the swart Italians curtly off
With one abrupt, stupendous precipice,
As if some planet-carving Demiurge
With one strong sweep of his resistless sword
Had shorn the rock-ribbed framework of the globe
Clean through to centre, that the half-world fell
To lowest abyss ; the other reared its front
A massive bastion tilted up to sky,
A tyrant and colossal barrier,
Fit parting of dissevered hemispheres.
Harshly this bulwark bars the arrested vales
And bolts them darkly in, checks man and beast,





GATHERING EDLEWEISS.

The insect's flight and flight of fickle birds
Save the rare eagle on his level vans.
A wall so sheer no snow doth cleave to it,
No cleft-sown cedar mask its nakedness,
No hardy birch get root-hold in its seams ;
Barely the many-fingered mosses cling,
Brown lichens curl, and fearless saxifrage
Shakes out its milky bells against the crag,
Where dainty-footed chamois flash and cross,
A living lightning, its impassive face ;
So deep its plunge that half a measured league
Of reeling air not brushes to its base,
Where spire-tall pines wave small as grasses may ;
And from its dizzy brink, the traveler
Swooning with fear plucks back his hasty foot
As if a mottled snake stung suddenly,
Or skulking death in ambush 'neath the brim
Caught at him sharply calling loud his name.
In naked grandeur breaks the huge rock down
Unbent, unbuttressed, undivided, black,
From the cold snow-line to warm haunts of men,
Then folds its feet about with velvet meads,
Where thick grass springs and vineyards yield their grapes,
Brown hamlets nestle, tinkling goat-bells ring,
And soft-aired, verdurous valleys bend away
Toward orange groves and where gray olives bud.

But far aloft the silent silvery peaks,
Swept round by tangled glaciers as an ocean isle
By swirling currents, o'er-survey the world

Mid lifeless solitudes ; nor know life's stir,
Save the lost chamois whistling for his herd,
Or when the starling in disordered hosts
Makes migratory turmoil o'er the snow,
Or clang'rous storks from Scandinavian thatch,
In flight for lands of mosque and groves of palm,
Rustle the silence with their rapid wings.
All else repeats the lonelier age ere life
Was born ; the thoughtless wind makes harp Æolian
Of the serrate crag, the avalanche falls,
The rock decays and tumbles roaring down ;
But voiceless are the wastes where no man dwells,
Where bat nor bittern haunts, nor lone wild beast,
Whose dells are vacant of the cricket's song,
The cry of owl, or plaintive whippoorwill,
The sea-susurrus of the southing pines,
And everywhere is desert unrelieved.

For ages thus, dim with aerial mists,
Untouched of any soil of common earth
Her ermined Highness on a rock-hewn chair
Sits throned in guise imperial ; her seat
Of no wrought porphyry's empurpled pride,
Nor chiseled marble rough with artist's thoughts ;
But crumpled schists of gneiss and protogine
With mica's shining toughness firmly laced ;
Nature's coarse-grained originals untouched
Of nice refinements, ragged, battered, bronzed
And scribbled thickly o'er with mystic runes
That tell how from red fire they came, and how

Transformed afresh from sea, and how were raised
Upon the Atlas-back of gases strong,
How fixed in place and shaped; legend most strange!
Which they who ran have read scrawled large
In that barbaric tongue wherewith—his mark—
The sloven Time signs all his manual works.

Beneath, the ponderous Mountain-pillar sinks
Its shaft and admantine strength far down
Beyond the glimpse of ever-prying sun,
Night-piercing moon, or eye of watchful star,
Beyond discovered reaches of the mine,
Beyond the oozy gorge of ocean's floor,
To Pluto's murky cave and realm of fear;
Where imprisoned earthquakes shake their hideous bars,
And young volcanoes bubble gruesomely;
There rests the Mount, its vast foundations braced
On that colossal arch whose soaring span
O'er vaults the muttering lakes of central fire,
The flux and fume of windless inner seas
And molten bays still vexed incessantly.

Italian skies of deep untroubled blue
Thrice-dyed bind close their sapphire coronet
To Monte Rosa's alabaster brow.
The climates, runaways from guardian months,
Race up and down her sides capriciously
Like truant children whiling out the time.
The gypsy clouds a-loitering mid the hills,
Strolling adventurers from the teeming sea,

Rehearse their shows before her and discourse
Their evanescent pomp to her eternity ;
Now pitch their roving tents on her large slopes,
Now flutter arrowy streamers from her tip,—
Pennons of coasting tempests still mast-down
The low horizon ; now storm-turbans furl
About her brow ; then lifting climb the cope
Of careless heaven to jeer her envious heights
With higher cliffs of fog ; or drooping low
In long pavilions stretch their lazy folds,
Soft canopies above her lily head,
'Neath which she seems to lie reclined at ease,
Some stately daughter to a sceptred king,
Head leaned on hand in summer indolence,
And large fair limbs outstretched at length half-clad,
Half-bare, while lights and shadows changefully,
Like furtive smiles from sleepy eyelids shed,
Play o'er her fields of snow and reveries faint
Steal through her thoughtful heart in silentness ;
Heedless as love of time and what time brings,
And pure as Dian walking heaven alone.

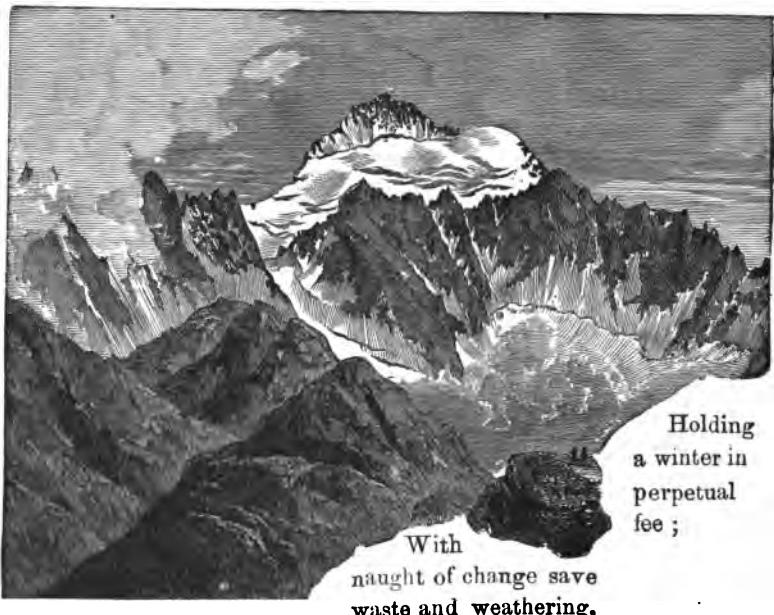
Thicken the clouds, she hails the gathering fray
And yields her queenliness to hordes of storm ;
With sweet, cool breath conjures the vaporous throng,
Like wily Circe in her subtlety,
And of their pilfered spoil from every sea
She robs them cunningly, while they beguiled
Lie softly on her bosom ; nor resents
Rude rain, nor hail, nor blasts of bullying winds

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ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS

P.

L



With
naught of change save
waste and weathering.

Holding
a winter in
perpetual
fee ;

That howl their bluster in her ice-hung caves,
Nor blow from lightning's arm whose sword of flame
Smites on her streaming forehead brutally,
Cleaving her well-forged crags as woodman cleaves
A log with ringing axe; throws fiercely back
The bellowing thunder's overwhelming noise
Thrice and four times reverberate from her walls;
Lets slip the flying avalanche from its high perch
Across the rocks to stoop a feathery cloud
Of white-winged mischief on the smothered meads;
Or flings the fragments of her rended cliffs
With booming uproar to the lowest dell.
Herself as wild as any tempest born
Of the conceiving heaven's immingled airs
Joins in the loud illimitable tumult
As one with elemental nature's self,
Not unscathed, but of all scath unreckful;
And while the scowling rabble of low cloud
Spits out its snow-flakes to confederate winds,
Plucks in the fleecy waste to every cleft,
And craftily with shuttles of the blast
Weaves a new surface to her seamless robe,
Wherein, the storm withdrawn, she meets the day,
Serene as Juno on Olympus throned,
And sparkling more than night's assembled stars.

So Monte Rosa stands in empery,
And so has stood more slowly-pacing years
Than there are needles on the branching pine,
Holding a winter in perpetual fee,

With naught of change save waste and weathering;
Cloud, calm, and sun her sole vicissitudes.
Nor ever could the tardy spring here find
A fruit-tree grown to hang her blossoms on,
Nor summer leaves to shade her burning eyes,
Nor could boy-autumn shake a browning nut
From any copse within her terraces.
Sparse arctic plants, children of ancient cold,
Hang small and weak about her glaciers' lip,
Left as belated stragglers in the flight
Their comrades made, upon the ragged skirts
Of the sun-tattered ice-cape once thick-wrapt
About the shivering shoulders of the North.
But on her bossy uplands plays no child,
Nor human generations dare advance
Their monuments amid her pinnacles.
Coldly she keeps her virgin court, nor heeds
Of all revolving earth's far-ranging course
And punctual circuit through sun-governed skies.

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ASTOR, LENOX AND
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F

L



THE GLACIER.

III.

THE GLACIER.

THE miser Winter banks unbounded hoards
Of silvery snows locked fast in wards of frost
On Monte Rosa's stronghold ; there, with clutch
Of unrelaxing fingers stiff for cold
Holds them well-guarded lest the spendthrift hours
Of lavish summer filch the treasured store.
Deeply he dreads the prowling fohn-wind's breath,
Deeply, the bold tax-gatherers of the sun,
And stealthy depredations of gray rains.
But misers' hoards o'erswollen may overflow
And fall to human uses ; so these snows
So keenly guarded heaping more and more
By often robberies of traveler-clouds,
O'er-stuff the mountain coffers, burst their bars
And squeezed through niggard Winter's full-crammed fist,
Drift off unnoticed towards a choked ravine
Dug straitly through the mountain's midmost scaurs,
Where meet them sunbeam-fairies flush of fire

And change their garb to crystal; so disguised
They hie to join the glacier's secular march,
Through zones of winter to the sounding streams.

This glacier stream compact of welded snows,
A flowing solid of translucent ice,
Brims to its verge a flinty gorge; there lies
Extended in the sunshine silently,
A charmed frost-dragon in steel-gleaming scales
Coiled close the crags between in many a fold
And sinuous curve and glancing, fretful ring,
Like that strange serpent-beast—the Fafnir foul
That gloats above the Niblung's ruddy gold.
A monster vast and vague, whose horrent spines.



The nodding séracs on his bended neck,
Tall-bristling as a feudal city's towers
Make show of kindling anger; whose blue mouths,
A thousand grim crevasses, spread their jaws
Like graves in sapphire hewn for living men.
In his rock-riven lair he lies supine,
Groaning by turns as gorged with heavy food;
And feigning sleep secretes a dull intent
To inch along unnoticed, vale-ward bound
In some dim hope of disenchantment there.

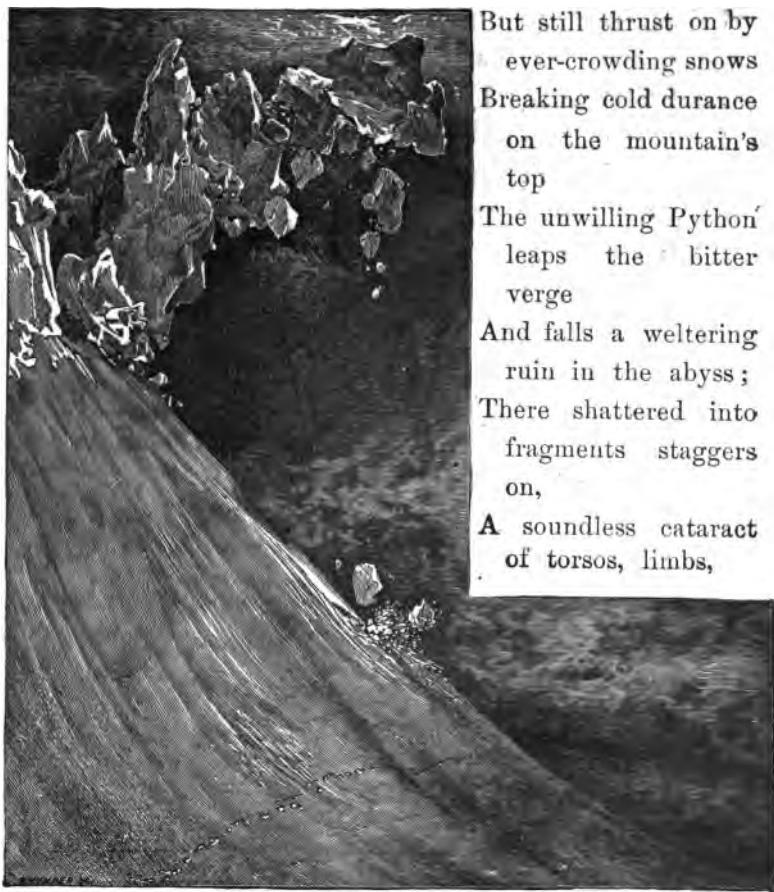
A Protean changeling, much he masquerades.
Eluding quest along his devious way;
First spreads abroad a thresher's level floor,
Then in long rigid swells gray ocean mocks,
Or swings the knotted glitter of his train
Rough as a highway groined by laboring wheels,
About some cape of crag, or promontory
Obtruded on his path; then staggering down
A sharp declivity, one ruffled coil
Disparts its glittering scales that flinging back
The sun betrays the reptile on his way.

Anon he crushes through a steep defile,
Where strained convulsive struggles craze his back
With gulfy chasms and ridges of dumb surf,
And leave him wrecked as had an earthquake tossed
In night-mare sleep beneath his brittleness.
Here, toppling icebergs lift their glassy cliffs,
There, well-squared blocks huge as the slave-cut stones

Of building Pharaohs lie in anarchy;
But down a gentler gorge he shows the face
And fretful foam of some great steamer's wake
Mid the green wrath of storm-responding seas.
While still as sleeping crocodile by reedy Nile,
That basking in the sunshine sleepeth long,
The sluggard keeps his journeying unbetrayed.

But reaching suddenly the frightful brink
Of a sheer precipice, the glacier halts
As stiff with horror, all its steely spines
Glancing in regiments of pikes and spears
Like bayonets of broken soldiery,
Dismayed by rumors of an unseen foe,
And fixed in wild disorder as they stand.

And when the moonlight sheds elusive gleam
Upon these frigid fantasies, the wan-faced throngs
Stand ghastly horrible, a maniac rout
Of graveyard ghosts as by mad impulse seized,
An eerie throng of goblins, spectres, elfs
All leaning guilty forward bent for home
But caught untimely in their panic-flight
By toll of matin bells and cock's shrill crow
In the cool break of dawn, and petrified
Upon their fearsome track; dumb as their tombs,
Save when some glimmering tower driven secretly
Beyond his poise tilts headlong down the steep,
A bursting bomb of ruin flying wild
And clanging plausive echoes with its din.



But still thrust on by
ever-crowding snows
Breaking cold durance
on the mountain's top

The unwilling Python
leaps the bitter
verge

And falls a weltering
ruin in the abyss;
There shattered into
fragments staggers
on,

A soundless cataract
of torsos, limbs,

And mangled men in marble, as had here
Great Athens dashed her sculptured failures down
From this unfaned Acropolis; or forms
In beauteous mother-o'-pearl—the tortured flow
Of cooling lava writhing like men damned;
And next 't is thunderless Niagara,
Or rather that broad rapid ere the fall,

Seized in grand rush of all its racing floods,
Its waterspouts, its jets of jeweled foam,
At fullest volley by the arresting breath
Of zero cold; that fierce flow frozen, all swirls
Congealed, each furrowed rill, each dashing spray
And every rainbow bubble struck in air
At top of speed and crystaled as it flew;
While here and there a leaning Pisa-tower
Mid-rapid left stands strangely eminent
Amid its prostrate compeers, rooted fast
Within its sliding base.

Thus wounded, torn
At surface; but deep down the wily Worm
Has kept his flexible body whole and sound;
All fresh and unconcerned and fearlessly
He holds his headstrong course to that low vale
For which he started half an age ago.

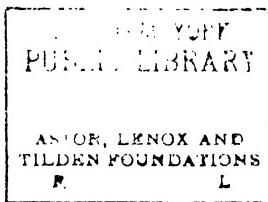
The ice-fall past, the glacier plucks him in
His shivered members, smooths his rueful face
And spreads again in fair expanse of field,
A fruitless glebe no whistling plowboy turns,
No sower seeds, no sickle reaps, though lying plane
And well-bestead with limpid boiling springs,
With here and there a tiny lakelet set
Like a clear sapphire in a silver ring;
A lakelet cold, whose depths untenanted
See never minnow herding in its pools,
Nor swift-finned pike dart on the silly dace,
Nor painted trout surprise the gilded fly,

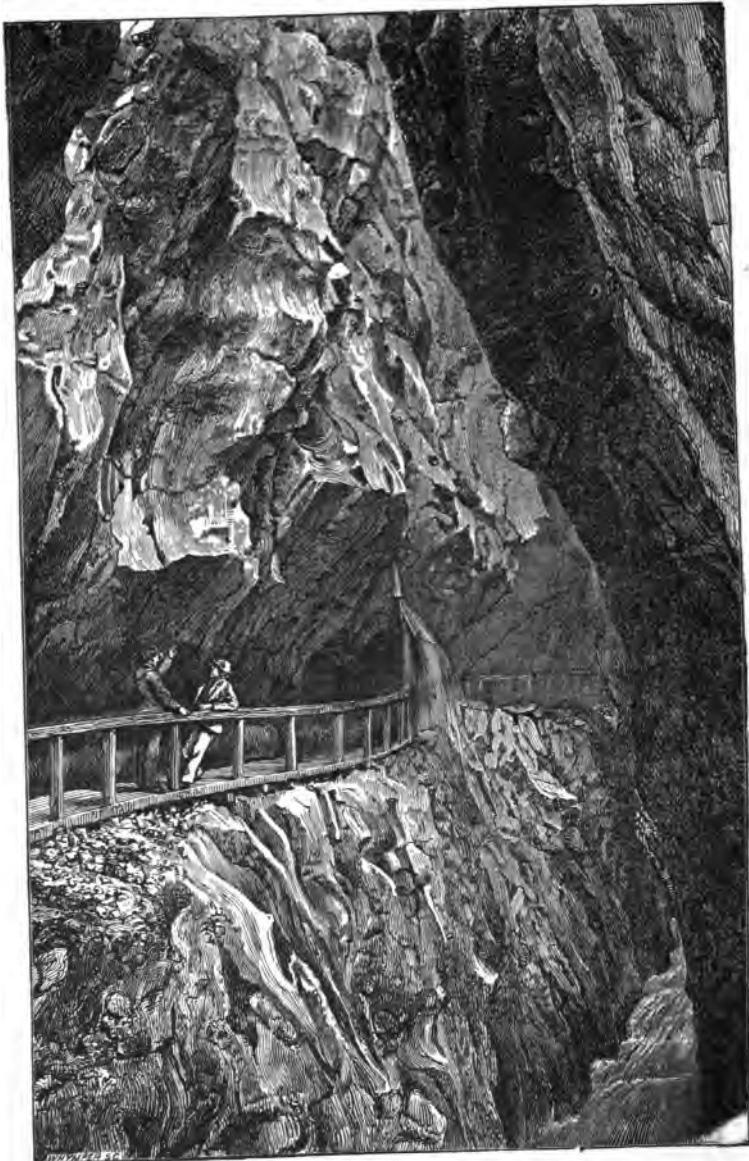
But crystal waters mirror sky and cloud
Within uncarven bowls of sea-green ice,
Beakers for blustering Thor and Odin great
When tired of Asgard in the auroral North
They stirred adventures mid archaic hills;
Pellucid meres, whose baby wavelets break
In cradle murmurs on the unpebbled marge
Where greens no sedge, nor music-making rus.
No cress, nor water-loving flag, nor mint,
Nor odorous lily brave in white and gold.

By night the ice-sheet lies as dead with cold,
But sunrise brings the thrill of life to it;
For rustling through its pores like wind in corn
Millions of water-dews begin to drip
With myriad morning murmur musical
And stir its pulses with first throbs of life.
The drops to rills, the rills to rivulets fill
And these to brooks that wax to dashing streams
The streams at noon tide into torrents swell
That foaming on their course with rocket-speed
Groove glassy sluice-ways in the dripping ice
Whose bed is veined like agate, smooth and bright
As pave of polished marble when the sun
Lights up its watery glimmer,—as 't is seen
At new St. Paul's outside the Roman walls.
Here coffined all alive the bubbling floods,—
Swifter than storm-blown birds that turning skim
A gale to leeward, smoke and race along
Clashing their cymbals in melodious haste,

Nor once draw bridle in the breathless rush
Until they reach the Moulin's gruesome pit,
A goblin's well of gloom unsearchable
Bored without augur through the glacier's breast,
And weirdly hung with looped and torn ice-fringe,
And ragged icicles about its lip;
Here fearlessly bounds in the ramping flood
Mid muffled thunders from the narrowing walls,
Breathing a watery smoke to heaven, then snared
By cold enchantments sulks in crystal caves,
Nor sparkles into sunshine thence for many days.

Far down the gorge the glacier welters on
Out-breathing death wherever points its tongue,
While on it grows nor tree nor smallest shrub,
Nor bird gives voice, nor ever any beast
Goes down to graze there, nor doth insect glean
His morsel-meal from its dull barrenness;
But in its maw lie graceful chamois dead,
Entrapped fond brutes! in some unblest crevasse
With travelers pale and o'er-adventurous guides
Snatched from the crest of life's most happy hour
To this drear sleep and hated sepulchre.
And on its bosom tombs the errant bee
And silly butterfly encrystaled there,
By sunshine traitored to a flowery quest,
Where never flower blossomed, nor shall bloom;
And on its naked back it hales away
Great loads of mountain spoil in smutty lines
Of black moraine, the shapeless scale and shred





Of grand old crags and beauteous peaks whose strength
It slowly ruins,—slave that slays its king.

A belt of Arctic cold, this Python lies
Coiled deep about the valley, girding fields
And billowy hills as with a silver zone
That flashes splendor to the summer skies;
Then foully burrowing 'neath rocks and earth
Is disenchanted by the magician Sun
Whose generous lure has brought it down so low,
And bounds away to freedom like a fawn,
A dancing river turned, the lusty Wisp;
Its bugle-winding streams make posting haste
To join their comrades in the leaping Rhone,
And bound towards blue Lake Leman ringed with peace.

But daily freed the glacier daily fills
A rock-crammed gallery with torrent-floods
That fuller flow the more the dog-star burns,
Gladdening the meadows of remotest men
With benefactions sprung they know not whence,
And haply care not in their indolence.
So every snow-flake wrung from Winter's hoard
And miser-clutch, finds its old home,—the sea,
And frolics on the surge whence in a cloud
By bold Ixion, that bright lover Sun,
'T was ravished willingly so long ago.

Oh! happy we, whose brief and page of life
On kindlier reaches of remembered time

Is written, when but starveling broods and spawn
Of pristine monster-glaciers gall the hills;
Nor know as our unknown forefathers knew
His deadly greatness, when one ice-sheet wrapped
His vast of body round each isolate peak
And trailed a mighty octopus his hundred arms
And loathy tentacles of horrid death
Across the fertile acreage, then gorged
The valleys with his slimy hulk and crawled
Unwieldy o'er the hill-sides for his prey;
Winning the reindeer from cold Norway down
And woolly mammoth with their vanished mates
That craved perpetual winter for its cold.
How groaned the land beneath his frigid bulk!
How fled skin-clad barbarians affright!
Their pastures buried, wattled huts o'erturned
And hunting grounds laid waste, nor dared return
For drear immeasurable millenniums,
Till wounded grievously the glacier lay,—
Fafnir by solar Siegfried deeply cloven,—
A dragon shriveled, spent, and shrunken back
And to high mountain fastnesses confined;
Mere fossil of his prime, and mummied corse
Of that prodigious spoiler whose foul length
O'erlay this realm with universal blight
And hideous leagues of body unassailed.
But now in his abandoned ranges wide
Men plant their vines and drink the blood of grapes,
Build sunny homes and reap their grains in peace
So long as he returns to scourge no more.



The
Sources
of the
Rivers.

Perennial snow,
perennial stream,
Perennial motion,
all things seem:
Nor time, nor space
will ever show
The world that was
an hour ago.

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**ASTOR, LYNCH AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS**

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L

IV.

ST. THEODULE.

BENEATH dark Breithorn's glancing helm, 'twixt that
And rearing Matterhorn, St. Theodule
Bends graciously its snow-white neck, as when
The laggard ox stoops low his tranquil head
To take the yoke; so forms a crescent pass
In that forbidding wall which otherwise
Imprisons Zermatt the streamy in its guard.
Thence on clear days when noon pours its steep light
On the white wonder of the Rosa's snows,
The Mount displays its royalties at full.
Set like a castle mastered of great drifts,—
Donjon, portcullis, banquet hall and moat
All half-submerged beneath them,—while its lords
Are gone, and gone its ladies all, it stands
Corner to a supernal masonry
Whose marbled scarps within their crescent hold
The Gorner glacier's smooth arena, thus
Building a matchless amphitheatre—
Of girth to shrink Rome's Colosseum famed

To scarce a feaster's bowl,—with glacier paved,
And terraced through the clouds with shelf and wall
Of crystal glacier,—stairway to high heaven.
Here seems as if the Almighty's writ had run
To build a court for that tremendous day
When dead men's souls black with all sins are haled
Mid trumpets' blare, before the angelic hosts
Cherub and seraph, singing, sworded, winged,
And here assembled, crowding coign and cave
With dazzling ranks of Heaven's imperial guard,
That still shall not out-brave the blazonry
Of these broad snows beneath this mid-day sun.

Here Bfeithorn, Kleine Matterhorn, and Twins,
Lyskamm, and many-towered Rosa flanked
By nameless goodly summits,—surpliced choir,
Of deathless singers choral without song,—
In one transcendent foreground meet the eye,
From crown to base, from base to dizzy crown;
What silver splendor,—great white throne of God!
How jetty precipice and delicate spire
With every craggy cape and curving bay
Are boldly marked amid the measureless snows,
With lustre blinding noon, and putting sun to shame !
What tireless roods of heaven-assaulting stone
Go charging at the zenith, lance in rest,
To pierce the trembling arch of firmament,
That bends a lover's pace beyond their tips,
And frames their majesty in blue repose !
Their near horizon hides the rest of earth,

And peasant Nature stands like churl new-crowned
Dazed at imperial glories all her own,

Here one refulgent morning after days
Of storm when hosts of thoughtless clouds had flung
Discarded snows on every bossy hill,
Chanced a good bishop from a western See,
A man athletic for his years and work,
Who held great Nature dear and not too much
Accursed by her Creator's word of haste,
When Adam "took and ate." Here toiling on
O'er the high level of St. Theodule
Whose sheeted slope as Indian ivory shone,
The Alpine spectacle immense and pure,
A visual anthem of the universe
Stirred his grave soul to prophet's ecstasy ;
That so he stood quite still and called his guides,
Those hardened veterans in such sceneries,
To check their swinging steps and bare their heads
With him in bended reverence, while each,
As each had learned at mother's knee, re-said
In his own native speech the Lord's great prayer,
Our Father which in Heaven art (as chanced
A psalm in triple tongue), to testify
Transcendent gratitude to most high God
For such amazing glory at its full.

So stood he with the astounded hill-men there,
Like some primeval Druid in his woods,
Head bared and lifted hands outspread toward heaven,

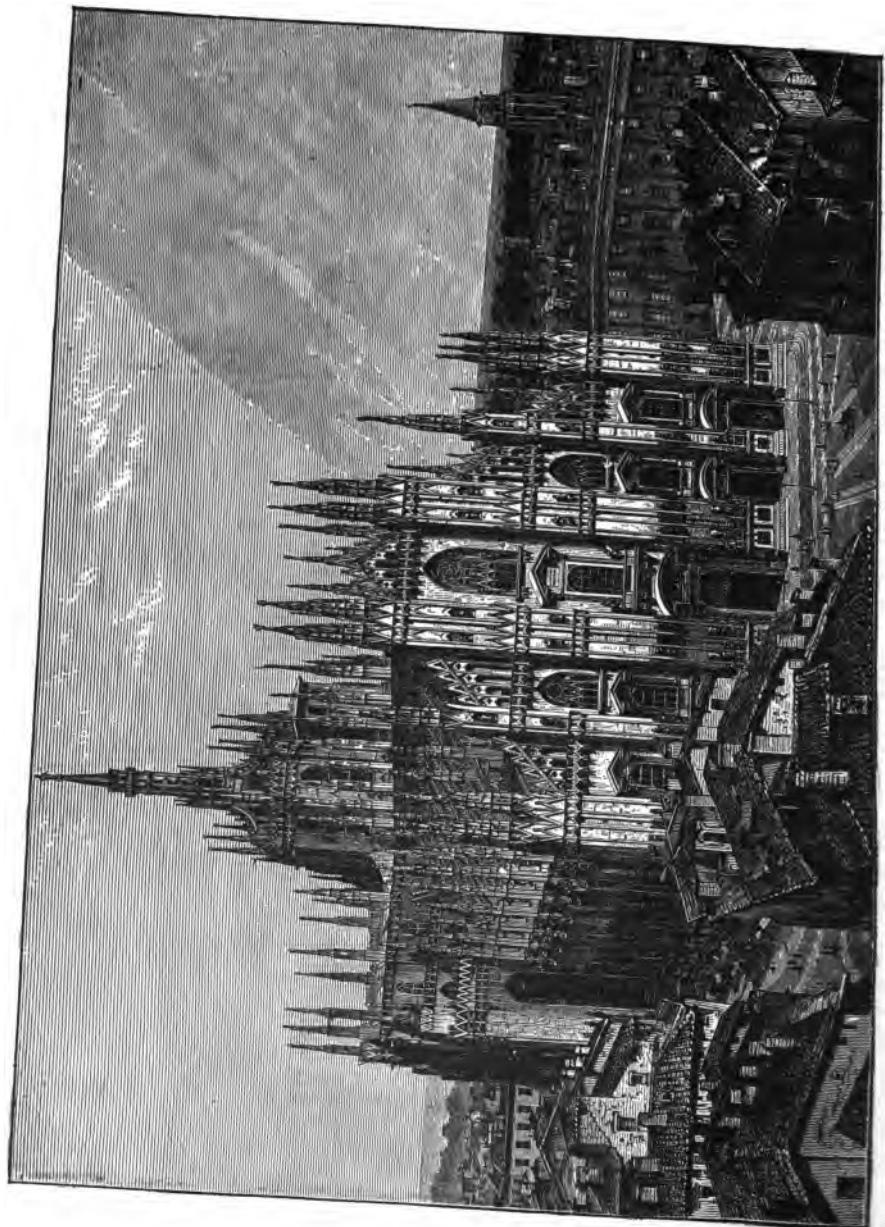
His white hair floating on the idle breeze,
Adoring ancient Nature — goddess dear
And mother of all worships 'neath the sun—
With deep, ancestral reverence ere he knew
Her gracious cult behind its thin disguise ;
Stirring the wintry waste with such a voice
Of transport as his high cathedral roof
Had seldom echoed from its fretted vault.

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P

L



V.

MILAN.

A STRANGER once in Milan loitering
Throughout a leaden day, fatigued at last
With the rich city's treasures — jewels, shrines,
Ivories and pictures and the Iron Crown, —
I turned my steps to the Duomo's fane,
The hour before the dimmed Apollo drove
His drowsy team below the western wave.
Thence through the incense fumes and by the priest
Droning his dolorous chant, I passed intent
To mount the pinnacled saint-peopled roof,
And saw the vesper city dim beneath
And nothing more, and felt how small the World.

But suddenly the clinging vapors touched
By chill of gaining night swept back their folds
And opened all-glorious Nature to her depths.
Like all the immortal Gods, the white-cliffed Alps,
A full Olympus of divinities,

Towered high in sunny grandeur on the north,
And Monte Rosa like great Hera first.
Upon her swart and dreadful precipices
A solemn beauty delicately shed,
And in her dusky vales a tender glow
Of purpling atmospheres that royally
Swathed crag and buttress and each shaggy spur
In veils and draperies of wavering grace ;
But on her fulgent spires, ah ! light of lights,
That made heart sigh for passion of her seats,
Their fadeless pleasure, and ethereal calm.

Pensive as fabled fields of Asphodel
Lay all the primrose upland faint with sleep ;
A garden of Hesperides whose close
The gold-haired daughters of the kingly Sun
Kept carefully where fear, nor night, nor death
Could come, nor winter fall for all its snows ;
But where the palm might lift its plumy fronds,
The peacock burn, the slim gazelles find rest
And all rare things the gloaming hollows hold.

Soon sank the sun ; topaz to ruby warmed
Upon the flushing snows till spire and dome
And every silver valley filled with fire ;
And like a heavenly rose upon the sky
The well-named Rosa blossomed full and large,
And flung her blushes to the eastern clouds
And far across gray earth and lay on heaven
One rare wild bloom of awful loveliness.

Then gathering fire the rock itself did burn,
A flameless pillar, red Arabian gold,
Or precious coral from Tunisian seas
Surge-fashioned into one vast altar-pile
Whose horns aglow with evening's sacrifice
Rebuked the sinful valleys where foul night
Already marshalled forth her ancient glooms
And called marauders from the sable pines.

Yet fading slow, as fled the truant sun,
Failed to such flowery hues and ravishing,
As o'er shy spring's ambrosial orchards roll
In fold on fold of odorous April bloom
Where white and pink contend for mastery,
And now the pink is all and now the white,
But lovely, dainty, pure and delicate
As cheek of maid; as if the dewy eve
Had touched the rude rock's flinty heart and set
Unwonted juices leaping in its veins
And hardened pulses till it smiled in flowers.

But paler grew against the murking dusk
Till blent with cloud, a cloud it feigned, yet more,
Of subtler line than ever cloud sustained;
Rather say, a cloudy billow heaped with foam,
A swollen, isle-engulfing surge wind-piled
Beyond all fellow, and thus struck to stone
And fixed in air so loftily it seemed
The roof and parting of the finished world;
While gleamed o'er all one slim spire vermeil-stained

As if some great archangel travel-tired
Had lit a moment rosy on its tip.
With sight of its Olympian strength, men's hearts
Waxed strong, and in its restfulness had peace.
And so it stood until the jealous Sun
Drove off in anger taking all his beams
And left that half-world to the starry eve ;
While Venus hung above the mountain's brow
And with the new moon glittered on its snows.

Then turning I beheld the marble saints
Of that superb cathedral who had seen
The sunset burn on Rosa, eons long ;
And thus recalled an ancient chronicle.
How one bright morn in more God-haunted days,
While heaven still fondled earth with magic hand,
'Neath near Aosta's towers of cruelty
Stood young monk Anselm later bishop famed
And saint of holy church ; stood in the fields
And saw the lazy laborers that shirked
Their tasks and loitered o'er them faithlessly.
With hot heart noting this their waste of sun
And bounteous hours, he chanced to lift
His angry glance to these pure-shining heights
And started forth impulsively to scale
Their cliffs, and lay his zealous tale of fault
Before the King most high, and get men blame.
Faint voices honey-sweet seemed calling loud
To ascend ; and so for half a summer's tide
He climb, till sore and spent and hungering

As may e'en saints at last, he found out-spread
As only saints may find, a table set
With linen fair, and fine white bread thereon,
Of which he ate and deemed it angel's food,
So sweet it was; and rising felt new strength
With thought that God had met him to bestow
A heavenly manna on his need. Then he
Descended with a grateful mind, forgot
Complaining, wrath, and blame, for he had learned
How hard was toil, how precious rest, how dear
Mid work were loitering, leisure, laughter, joy.
So in his own delight at nature's ease
And loveliness, he found no longer place
To accuse the peasant if he shirked and sang,
And made life glad amid his master's vines.
Such gracious healing-touch these pure hills lay
On childlike hearts not all to nature closed.

And everywhere a subtle sorcery
Prevails; the mountain charm subdues all change
Of changeful nature to itself unchanged.
Splendor of sun or pallor of chill moon,
Dawn's tranquil gold, eve's afterglow of fire,
Stillness like sleep or roar of hindered storm
But magnify, not mar her majesty;
While all the wearing years that waste the world
And human hearts as well, but little win
From that high grace wherein it pleases God
To keep his mountain standing for a time.

BOOK SECOND.

I.

THE ASCENT.

BUT not at Monte Rosa's foot appalled
Need men sit cowed while envious of her heights.
A clever cragsman sound of limb and bold
May stoutly dare the snow, the ice, the crag
And push his clamber till he stand supreme
On the sharp tip, a blunted needle's point,
And zone the world with solitary gaze.

While earth yet sleeps within that shadow cool
Of her own body, which men call the Night,
Strides forth the alert and girded mountaineer
With clattering heels that worry all the house
Across the friendly threshold of the auberge
Crowning the Riffel's brim high o'er Zermatt.
With him go brave companions and bold guides,
And toilsome porters carrying food and gear ;
Stalwart, stout-hearted Swiss of that staunch race,

Who kiss the hands of Danger in their youth
And swear him loyal service ; oft they die
Slain by these ruffian crags yet all the more
They bless and love them, counting time and life
Beyond their shadow, grief and banishment.

Keen Alpine axe in hand and shoulder ringed



With coil of trusty rope whereon may hang
All lives ere day is done, the men fare forth
Across the frosty sward whose downward trend
Misgives the coming toil with short-lived ease ;
See the large constellations burning bright,
The Milky Way's high bridge and trembling mile

Sprung o'er the wide corral of reindeer hills
That toss their antlered foreheads eerily
Within the lonely magic of the night.
How ghostly looms the all-dispeopled world,
How hollow its dark silences! How bare
And lonely as were living men all dead!

Sombre and dull, oppressed with lingering sleep
They stumble through the pathless shingle where
The glow-worm lantern throws a flickering beam
That darkens darkness with uncertainty;
And skirt untouched columnar Riffelhorn,
Whose guilty rock, like many a taller Alp,
Has slain its man without remorseful sign;
Then mount the Gorner glacier's stationed flood,—
A solid Amazon with mighty breast
Flung naked to the stars in pulseless sleep—
And dash along in angry wonderment
That men should waste their drowsy, restful morns
In such emprise to climb a foolish hill.

But ere their facile feet have paced its breadth,
Behold! the Bedouin Night strikes his brown tent,
And swift of foot slinks subtly down the west
Before a cool, thin light, that drives its hastening wave
Beneath the stars, and quenches half their eyes;
Beneath the stars, behind the sickle moon
That brightning hangs transparent on the East
Then fades to withered cloud, and less than cloud.

Meanwhile the cheery Day begins to light
Within the smoky caves of eastern mists
His earlier fires ; feebly they glimmer first,
In low white dawn astir with low faint breeze ;
Then reddening stealthily behind the fogs
Spread timidly as camping hunter's fire
Lit in a hasty heap of cold green wood,



Steals faltering on half lost in smoke,
Scarce giving sign if it will win or no.
But as our men surpass the glacial plain,
Now striking up the hill and cope of heaven
Auroral streamers dash the dappled scud
That floats so high it seems beyond the air,
With spray of saffron pale, then rippling wide-

Dye all the dusky East one tender wave
Of daffodil transpierced with twinkling stars

Then heaps delighted Morn his gaining fire,
And sees its glowing radiance flash abroad
Upon the scattered cloud-rack looped and laced
Athwart the red horizon, kindling it
Like summer thatch with swift access of flame,
And penciling its fretful caverns with hues
That shame the painted woodland's livery
When autumn frost to rainbow stains their green.
Now Day exults, and mad with haste melts down
The doors of his intolerant furnaces,
And flings his firebrands forth upon the drift
Of mackerel sky, then breaking every bound
A thousand torches in his hand, himself
Flies noiselessly along the scattered fogs
That catch in tranquil conflagration pure,
Intense, and vaster than those prairie fires
Whose smoke bewilders day; no smoke, nor noise,
But soft as blush of Spring along the buds
Of trailing sweet arbutus, stream fresh flames
Along the trembling vapors hanging low
Above the ghastly snow-fields, fusing all,
Till Heaven's high-ranging terraces are paved
With crimson leagues of incandescent cloud,
That blazing fiercely still blaze unconsumed.

Then last the Orient Sun—Day's dazzling lord,
His silver lances stretched on high before,

Shows his intolerable face undimmed
O'er lost horizons viewless for his beams,
And lifts his sceptre on the stooping hills
Now bending lowly towards his changeless seat,
As vassal earth on fervid axis whirls;
And loosing all his meteors into air,
Than star-showers brighter when the night is full,
Than snow-flakes thicker when the squall is fierce,
He plies the immeasurable gulfs of space
With glancing flakes and tides of living fire,
Flung in exhausting fervors from his urn,
That bring the dear familiar daylight back,
And all things dear to happy men with it.
But still in Rosa's shadow fresh as dew,
Our men with blood just bounding to the work,
Stride forward to the lower buttresses,
Where bolts the inexorable glacier down
Breaking a doorway to her solitudes.
And as they file between the rocky gates,
Troop forth the sunny meteors, flock on flock
Swifter than winter-shunning birds, and fly
In arrowy lines to Monte Rosa's tip
Of flushing stone, lighting in myriads.
Full legions more on unreturning wing,
Bear down to the grim baronage of peaks
Disheartened still with night's cold loneliness,
To cheer their drearihead with day's new smile.
Still following myriads, a noiseless host
Flit, gay invaders, through the airy void
And without foothold cling against the cliffs

Whose wrinkled eld they mask in plumes of rose;
Brush the wan snow plains with an alien gold;
Sweep deftly off the webs of silver rime,
By frolic night-folk spun in highland dells
For moonlight sports; unseal frost-fettered rills,
Pry through the heavy lids of herdsmen's eyes
And dauntless maidens' on lush pastures high,
Where breezy summer long they tend their kine,
For humble wealth, though lean return of curds;
Cloud-girt as Jove on Ida, dim to men
As sailors ice-embargoed near the pole,
And deaf to thund'rous tides of that great world
Ringed broadly round their feet, whose loud events
Break noiselessly to those unheeding heights.

Alone with mountains o'er a vanished earth
Our clan salutes the morn for them so fair;
Bright are the snows, and fresh the early breeze;
All nature like a lover's dream smiles peace;
Only men's homes are hid, hid valleys all
Roofed o'er with stationed cloud—fog counterfeits
Of ice-floes jammed in Norway's salty fiords;
Their white confusion crams each gorge, till now
Stung by the sunny aerolites like bees,
The solid-seeming floes break loose and fly;
And as great ships, whose drooping sails becalmed
A new wind strikes, rush on through laughing seas,
So swim these phantom icebergs up the bays
Of sunny air, with fleets of lesser scud

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L



Like sea-gulls on the wing, in hot haste bound
For higher realms, where reign the kings of Cold.

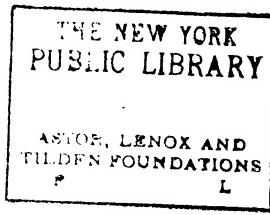
But though morn calls no living thing bestirs
Amid the graceless crags; no robin sings,
No chippering swallow skims the frosty air,
No marmot whimpers, bleats no tender kid,
Nor hums a beetle from his hammock flower;
But silently the tawny sunshine gives,
And silently the grisly rocks receive,
The wondrous transformation of the dawn.

And still the saffron meteors thicklier swarm
Than sparks from blacksmith's anvil when he smites
The fiery bar, and swarming burst above
The snowy gates, and pour their multitudes
Adown the shadowy valleys, till they rouse
The darkest gorges with the glance of morn.
Then all the dewy lowlands smoke and steam,
Swift cascades glitter, cattle rise and feed,
And sober, slow-limbed Switzers sleepily
Drift out from châlets quaintly carved with flowers
And pious legends, brown, deep-eaved, low-browed
And firmly storm-stayed 'neath stone-cumbered roofs,
To early toils of far-resplendent day.

Meanwhile our cragsmen, now beyond the wave
Of the great Gorner glacier, break the fast
Of fasting guides on "Auf der Platte's" rock,
Which ice-beleaguered foots the sharper steep.

Thence small as flies and slow as horned snails,
Cheered by the sun, their father in the flesh,
They breast the mighty bosses of the Mount,
Mid a pale death of Arctic sceneries,
And landscapes bare as scientific faith;
Such deserts know fond souls in Labrador,
And polar bears round Greenland's glaciated coast;
For Nature greets men here like Esquimaux,
Offers no flowers, no fruit, nor song of waking birds,
No mossy grove, nor hardship-scorning pine,
Nor place for rest, nor safety by the way;
What nun-like purity sits in her robe!
What saint-like beauty virgin in her face!
Yet is her mood malign, her temper ill,
A beautiful step-mother, foul at heart
She seems; her white hands apt at cruelties.
She stands for ruin ready every hour,
And to man's anxious life indifferent
As belted Saturn in his blameless sphere.

Now up the incrusted steeps of fruitless snow,
Night-carpentered to firmness fit for weight,
Their creaking steps ascend with steady tread,—
A morning stroll were this the style of all.
Rope-bound in line, lest some snow-screened crevasse
Trip some unguarded foot, they wind along
Like Reynard doubling from the nearing hounds;
Now lightly leap a maze of glacier chasms,
Now prone on face, crawl over wider gulfs
By thin snow bridges, frail as life in age,





Thrown o'er the blue and bottomless crevasse,
 Where even the summer lying lies a-cold,
 And that keen trapper Death keeps set his snares
 To catch the rash transgressor piteously.

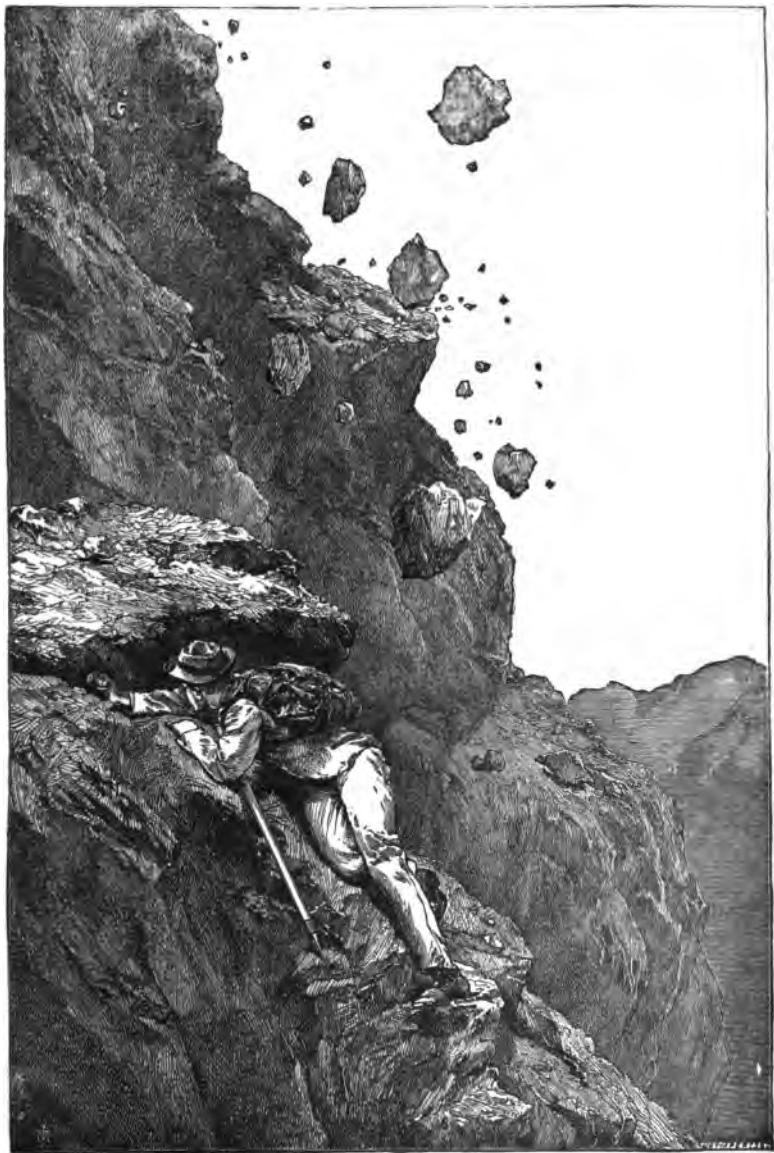


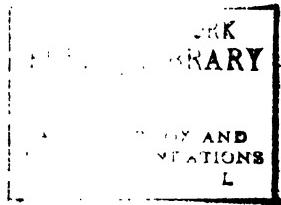
Now in a tangled network of crossed pits
 They toss uncertainly bereft of clue ;
 Or thence delivered next behold the guide
 Lead where the unharnessed avalanche lets loose
 Its countless milk-white herds whose thunderous charge
 Shakes all the Mount with fear ; and flit across
 Afraid to speak lest that small sound stampede
 Those timorous multitudes ; then lies their path
 Where *séracs* huge, and nodding to their fall,
 Lean toppling o'er an ice-deck's face of glass
 To hurtle down anon with lonely clang
 And sweep the deck with fierce broadsides of death.

Next crossing this as hares the scent of hounds
 And taking to the cliff they escalade
 Some guttered bulge of rock, while shadow-like
 They stain its cheek ; on its immensity
 Embarked like nautilus with his frail sail

On a large surge of ocean's liquid round ;
Now creep they quivering up a scantling shelf,
Where squirrel scarce could run his pretty track ;
Now cling by zig-zag seams where fingers, toes
Pinched bloodless in the crannies, barely hold ;
Then squeeze up some close chimney in the cliff
(No sooty sweep to narrower flues compelled),
Where ice-paved scarps, or smooth, or freaked with snow
Defy all essay, but for notches hacked
By the swift-falling axes' blows of skill ;
Or glued to palisades, with desperate clutch
Of blue rock-swallows hanging by their nests,
They hug and knee along, or up, or down,
Or sidewise, as pure chance allows ; e'en so
In doubt of outcome fortunate ; alarms,
Anxieties, excursions everywhere.
Till last like fluttered partridges they scud
To rocky covert from sharp musketry
And furious cannonade of boulders huge,
Shrill-humming gravel, tons of whizzing ice,
Deadly brigades of masked artillery
Discharged by skulking frost-imps overhead,
Who, keeping sleepless sentry rake the ledge
With these malignant volleys all the year.

And so our travelers moil, and trudge along,
Panting for breath, with trembling knees, athirst
And faint, hands bleeding from the sharp-fanged rocks,
And tired hearts knocking at their heaving ribs ;
Till, on a water-shed's unyielding ridge





They sit superbly horsed and gaze below,
Like daring boys astride a roof-tree keen,
And hard to hold, or leave; not long their peace,
For soon this seat of ice-enameled teeth
Stirs acrid quarrel with unpracticed flesh;
Requiting this, their lovers' warm embrace
With Arctic chill, and white-bear courtesies.

But matching wit with nature in all trims
At last they storm the "Saddle's" windy seat
And on its arched out-jutted promontory
Encamp for breathing-space and snatch of food,
Indifferent lunch o'er touched with wild surmise,
Though cheered by broadening views of Italy's plain;
For glancing 'cross the abysmal glacier-stream
Stretched dimly under, where it looks a thread,
They mark great Lyskamm's wintry precipice,
That bluffs them opposite with black dismay,
A thrilling type of dangers soon their own;
But vaunting prowess not a feather less
Than droughtier cragsmen boast, whose thews have dared
And conquered Lyskamm in his awfulness,
They draw not back, but brace their souls anew,
As men whom threats refresh, more resolute
To hale their quarry home, whate'er betide.

Useless the feat and dire the useless toil,
With trivial recompense for time waylaid!
And why should men but delicately bred,
With soft white hands woo labors so austere,

And peril thus their world for one grand hour
Of martial conflict with intrepid Death ?
Why ? But that we are children of rude sires,
And with ancestral humors o'er-infused ;
In us old ardors burn, wild instincts thrill,
Of our own will and motive innocent,
Which dim forefathers nursed to greatness, while
They held our souls in training till we came.
As they were hunters, herdsmen, warriors bold,
We living in their flesh crave open fields,
Bleak hills and streams, dark woods and aimless toils.
Their habits strong, the customs of wild years,
Lurk deeply lodged in our less brutish strain,
And wake to hunt us now afield, and now
To sail far seas, or raise all-risking wars,
And even to invent new dangers wantonly,
That so our dainty nerves may leap and thrill
With those fierce shivers of delight wherein
Our unhoused sires brawled out their burly lives.

Here in the wilderness we find old homes,
Ancestral acres lapsed through love of towns,
Abandoned playmates fresh and frolicsome
Whose turbulent comradeship will yet renew
In our but half-forgetful strain and flesh
The ancient exultations, coarse with strength,
Of mouldered sires re-born again in us,
Whom virtuous toils might else blight utterly.
The mount, the moor, night, snow and fearsome crag,
With all that puts sweet life at mortal odds,

Though yesterday acquaintances of ours,
Come to us thus as oldest family friends
Or dear antagonists invincible,
From our unbreeched progenitors, who threw
Their hearts upon them long ago ; and dying
Bequeathed their love and brotherhood to us,
A true-love gift, a heritage of blood,
A legacy within our members stored ;
A cold fierce friendship that breeds hearts of oak,
And trains the sinews like a mountain deer's,
Lends nerves of steel that spring at peril's throat—
A bandit craving for a bout with Death,
Ourselves, the priceless stake,—'gainst nothing.

Now on this crag we drink hilarity
In deep ancestral cups and wassail keep
With drafts of air that like Walhalla's mead
Makes gods of us ; with sunshine, singing wind,
Large sky, free space, and red barbarian blood
That storms the o'er-civil veins : with braggart joy
For Nature's hardness met with rival flint,
For dangers gayly dared, defied, disdained,
For hearts made match for what grim peril can,
And life enlarged to epic liberties.
How tame, degraded, pitiful, the lot
Of travelers wheel-bound to dusty roads,
And cosset safety ! their only care to dine
Deliciously ; their stern ambition then
Another day to dust and dine as well.

But chaff and jest here bubble gayly forth,
And laughter as of boys on holiday,
Renews life's royal youth; while boastfully
All scout the grisly terrors still in front,
And drunk with pleasure dream no dreams of fear.

So, soon they leap to foot again, refreshed,
And like Odysseus on Ægean seas,
Unsated with old perils now foregone,
Stand gladly forth to seek adventures new.

Now falls a wildering mist.—some rambling cloud,
And now a driving shower,—that cloud dissolved,
And then a dusty snow-flaw chokes the air
With pale frost-orchids, fluttering spectral down,
Breeding sharp winter in those balmy skies;
While Boreas blows his strident Alpine horn
About their ears with thought-confusing din,
And sings his jocund jödel to the crag.
Then swift returns the sun in withering strength,
Turning December back to hot July,
And melting tired limbs with swooning heats.
All weathers slit about the indifferent cliff,
Like martins round their summer-haunted eaves,
And flutter forth in weaving interchange,
Now cheerful, now severe, or wet, or dry,
Or hot, or cold, or gusty, or serene.
Mayhap a cloudlet,—cap-full of light scud
Engenders where they climb a patch of storm,
And thunders born of the quick-curdling mist

Like lions prowl and growl against their steps,
While snaky lightnings hiss from rock to cloud,
From cloud to rock, and wag their tongues of flame;
Are strong hill-spirits angered that they push
These tried old guardsmen forward to repel
The bold invader from their fortresses?

Then might such awful chance befall, as happed
To other climbers in less friendly years,—
That here, where now that snow slips hissing down,
Three goodly men were making for yon cliff,
When worse than worst of that which coward fear
Had forecast of, on this steep snow-roof caught
While creeping stealthily to perch of stay,
A startling crack, as were 't a signal shot
Fired by unseen conspirators in wait,
Pierced that crisp air with warning ominous
That chilled the blood within its citadel.
And scarce they drew a breath, ere strangely weak
Their foothold sank away a little space,
Then swiftly slipt, then slid amain, and then,
Dragged downward with an awful, mighty rush,
Fast and still faster with a torrent's speed,
They poured along the steep no more as men,
But things, mere driftwood in a freshet flood,
Or wreckage tossing in tempestuous surf;
Blinded and stifled with an icy dust,
Stunned by the thunderous roar, whirled now aloft,
And now engulfed beneath the foamy snow,
In the living avalanche devoured alive,

They slid, ah luckless coasters! headlong down
Towards one high brink, whence the abyss yawned
sheer.

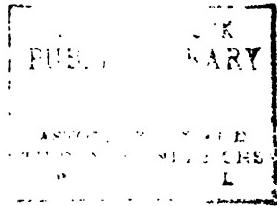
No breath for words! no time for thought! no play
For eager muscle! guides, companions, all
O'ermastered in the unconquerable drift,
In Nature's grasp held powerless, atoms
Of her insensate frame, they fared as leaves
In the dark rapid of November gales,
Or sands sucked whirling into fell simooms;
One gasp for breath, one strangled bitter cry,
And the cold wild snow closed smothering in,
And cast their forms about with icy shrouds,
And crushed the life out, and entombed them there,—
Nobler than kings Egyptian in their pyramids,
Embalmed in the mountain mausoleum,
And part of all its grand unconsciousness
Forever.

Its still dream resumed the Mount,
The sun his brightness kept, for unto them
The living men are naught, and naught the dead,
No more than snows that slide, or stones that roll.

But scathless of this extreme catastrophe,
Our mountaineers make good their troubled ply;
Though sore of foot, and with the snow-glare dazed,
Their foreheads fretted with the prickly sweat,
They lag upon the rocks, or softening snow.
Now gayety falls faint; endurance grim
Steps like a Spartan to the vacant lead.



AVALANCHE.



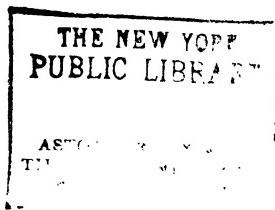
Oft crave they halt, and oft their mutinous eyes
Accuse the unbending summit, still so high.
Give wings, the Andean condor's vasty stroke !
Or thews, the nimble chamois' legs of steel !
To clear with bounds the uncompromising space,
That scorns our laggards, and derides their march.
In vain ! no Jove-sent eagle swoops in flight,
From circles empyrean to their aid,
As once to fair-limbed Ganymede he stooped ;
From far Arabia no Afreet hastes,
With magic powers to lift them bodily.
Their cramped and outraged muscles still must strain,
In their own blood must courage find its spring ;
And soon, for lo, great horror's acme last !
Danger undreamed of, monstrous, measureless !
The final *Arête*, the toothed and shaggy rib
Of that sky-piercing spire, that from the base
So delicate and dainty smooth appeared,
Uprears its ragged length,—the only path.
Scarce Strasburg's tower more hair-brained perilous ?
A bent, keen-pointed scimitar of crag
Set upright on its hilt, with scant a blade
More broad than Moslem's bridge to Paradise,
Hacked to a saw in elemental wars,
It cuts the clouds, and cleaves compacted storms.
Above our climbers' heads so dizzily
It reaches on, beyond the cast of sight,
Flouting poor skill, and cooling braggart tongues.

Who shall attempt that fanged and serrate rim ?
Who wrestle death on that perfidious wedge,

Sleet-mailed and bitten by the vicious winds?
Who scale that footless perch, a crazy stair
For suicides and angered souls, of time
And thought a-weary? Half a thousand feet
Of panic peril, either frenzied flank,
A pitiless, nerve-shaking precipice,
Shoots down to lancet-pointed rocks, a bed
Of heartless cheer to him who falls. Well now
May weaklings quail, for boldest mountaineers
Of earlier centuries ever turned their backs
On this grim devil's ladder, whence one slip
Were quick perdition and the fatal last
That makes of man a memory; so left
To mad-cap English hardihood the prize
And shining hour of those who dare and win.

Yet now the stalwart shoulders of a guide
Will bear the timid o'er it, if one choose
To save his courage for brave hours of talk.
But few will flinch where harder souls lead on.
Stolid with old resolve our comradeship,
Their faces set like flint and hearts as hard,
All wordless grasp that thin hand-breadth of stone,
That sleeted edge, that sun-groined icicle,
To dangle there 'twixt earth and sky, and climb,
Worse than the pendant Icelander who gropes
Along the wave-washed sea-crags to despoil
The eider's downy nest, despising death
If so his brood lie warm.

:





Now hand and foot,
Your best of cunning lend ! each sinew now
Be tense as steel and flexible as withe !
Quick-eyed, cool-nerved, stout-hearted, resolute,
Cleave to those rock-teeth with the clutch of fate !
Make sure your foothold, grappling well each step !
Let no affrighted glances stray to sound
The windy gulfs of those brain-whirling voids,
Or wander charmed across the widening view !
Be shrewd to shun each rocking stone, each wreath
Of flying snow whipped out above the abyss !
Grow like an ivy to a crumbling tower,
And, still grow upward, striving towards the sun,
Upward, still upward, far as crag shall call.
Crows fly below them ; clouds drift underneath ;
The air seems some bright æther drawn from heaven ;
An hundred feet is as a level mile.
No word or mirth enlivens now the task ;
But more like galley-slaves lashed to an oar
Than men on pleasure bent, they snail along ;
Point after point they take demanding each
To be the last yet still in each deceived.

An hour, a tedious, tardy-footed hour
Of dogged clamber, then the slender tip,
Goal of their search, desired long with pain,
Draws nearer, nearer to delighted sight ;
The haughty crest bates its unbending pride ;
Supreme in heaven an isle of lonely stone,
One stable speck mid shoreless seas of air.

It waits their conquering steps; then tranquil still
As marble Juno in her seated calm,
The Monte Rosa in her stateliness
Receives them bustling where they proudly come,
And yields them transient lodgment where for aye
She dwells ice-diademed, in ermine snows;
Nor lends her heed to their exhausted cheer,
Which dies still-born in that high solitude
Of unreverberate sky.

But they glad
As far-spent swimmers on a longed-for beach,
Not waiting, throw themselves along, and laugh
A silent laugh, sweeping a free glance round
The ringed horizon of the circle-world,
Where dimmed sight fails in purple depths of space.

II.

THE SUMMIT.

And what a vision greets their weary gaze ?
What wintry desolations ! chaos old
Out-chaosed ! kingdoms and seas of tumult !
Earth's torn foundations thrown against the sky !
As if that strong-limbed giant, Gravitation
Full of new wine, had pulled his rock-ribbed house
About him, driving rafter, girder, beam,
Through fractured wall and tumbled pediment !
Or did our old Earth-planet racing free
Collide with some swift asteroid, and crush
Her hull and flinty bulwarks midst of heaven ?

Alp piled on alp, mount upon mountain flung !
Tall ridges captained by superior peaks !
Valaisian, Oberland, and Dauphinè,
Graian, and Cottian, and Maritime !
Range ranking range to the blue tent of sky,
And proudly flattered by the full-orbed sun !

The armied Anakim as had they risen
An hour ago, and dressed their glittering ranks?
Or hosts of fair-skinned Norsemen on foray,
Encamped afield in Gothic turbulence,
Scarce chief obeying, loyal to small law,
And white their tents, as pitched but yesterday.
All living Vikings seem, about to move
And clash their bucklers, shouting thunder-loud
“Who comes intruding on our bivouac?”
The nearest thus.

The further masses merged

Through wild disorders to far-stretching lines
Of nameless burgs—the cloudy battlements
Of some gigantic folk, the precipice
Their wall impregnable, the peaks their war-towers,
Impassable ravines their moats of dread,
Bastions unstormed save of the jealous heavens.
Their parapets a wondrous sky-line draw,
With pyramids, rude Memnons, obelisks
Adorned as had dead Egypt lent her spoil,
Yet vaster; marked with older hieroglyphs
Than Luxor boasts, or buried Nineveh;
Scriptures of thrust and strain, of fracture, fire,
And frost, by those perpetual scribes, who scrawl
These no man's records of a no man's day.
Here as the distance lengthens, spire and crag
Draw in perspective to vast colonnades,
To which St. Peter's are as brown-ribbed reeds
To California's pines, while still beyond
And faint as truth when new, the misty last,

Their bases lost in grosser atmospheres,
Hang strangely pendant to the arch of heaven.

How vast the magic-builded spectacle !
Unearthly architectures scarce made with hands !
What disused fanes, dismantled fortresses !
What dateless White Czar's winter palaces !
The strong Frost-giants of old Jotunheim
Must once have plied a bitter industry
In their infernal tribes to pile these towers
To numbers so innumerable !

First

Display the great Valaisians, told before ;
Then dreamily beyond the ribbon Rhone
The tall Bernesers of the Oberland,
Pillars of cloud by day, at dusk of fire.
Their chief, if in such peerage chief may be,
Dark Finster-Aarhorn's harried pinnacle,
Whose heart of rock dismayed the vandal years ;
Deep-bosomed Jungfrau, Amazon of maids,
As for long-hindered nuptials still attired,
Whose safe charms ten thousand rosy sunsets
Flush with warm hues of youth, renewed in vain ;
Next, her severe confessor, white-cowled Monch,
Eldest Carthusian, celebrate unsworn,
Prevents fair Jungfrau from the hardihood
Of knightly Eiger, lover to her grace ;
There Blumlis-Alp laments her blighted flowers,
Gay asters, gentian blue, pale edelweiss,
Whose nameless sweetness made that high air glad,

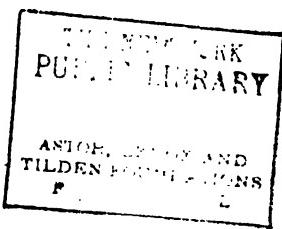
Till warlock foul, balked of fair lady's love,
Her green fields whelmed beneath charmed sheets of
snow;
There cloud-capped Wetterhorn's cathedral pile
Unconsecrate; whose crumbling minster towers
Fret the bright sky with elfin tracery.

Leave these and front another heaven, and lo!
Another pageant and a rival pomp;
For distant Grivola looms silvery soft
Against the languid South, where slant and sleep,
In wondrous peacefulness unvisited,
The wide white meadows of Grand Paradis
Enringed in black-mailed arms of scowling crag;
The wind-tormented crest of Les Ecrins
Smoking in stony surge mid smoking clouds,
And Monte Viso islanded in mist,
Within the violet distance leagues away;
While eastward Piz Bernina's wimpled hood
Upon the last horizon,—or is 't a cloud
Far-glistening o'er the frosty Engadine?
And west, Mont Blanc serene, whose perfect dome
To beggary shames the silver cupolas
Of all the Czars, uprolls his princely head
From out the speary thick of his *Aiguilles*,
And looks unchallenged monarch, o'er his peers,
Towards stately Rosa,—king to a rival queen.

Below, so far that even the pirate hawk
Swooping for prey above the living fields,



THE WETTERHORN.



Would never spy what in the hollow hides,
Pinched gorges knit their unrelenting brows,
And fertile valleys, rich with corn and vine,
Bend their sweet stream-like curves as they were gored
By pushing glaciers of the chillier prime,
Whose icy horns tore the primeval rock,
Trenched out the meadows, mowed the forests low,
And slew whole tribes of feather, fur, and fin.
Here winds the cataract-flashing Wispach vale,
Perpetual acre of immortal death,
And playground of all perils, where disport
The stealthy, village-smothering avalanche,
The frightful land-slip, when the half-mount reels
From its high vantage ruining to the plain ;
The earthquake's shuddering mischief from deep ground,
The bursting glacier's deluge unrestrained
Of giant ice-blocks riding on swift floods
With awful inundation, charging down
Upon the trustful valley laid asleep,
And sweeping off the herds, the crops, the soil,
Dear lowly homes and families of men.
There the Anzasca Cañon,—fissure seamed
'Twixt throttling cliffs, that ban health-giving suns
Save at the top of noon, and foul disease
Engender mid its large sublimities.
There happier Alagna's bowery gorge,
Idyl in rippling foliage and gray stone,
Where frothy cascades cool from springs of snow
Fling out a drenching spray to boughs, whereon
The watery Naiads might sit carelessly ;

The glossy chestnut blooms, the odorous birch
And sweetly fruitful fig with laurels blend
Immingling on the war-worn cheeks and brows
Of mammoth boulders, littered round like leaves,
Whirled off in storms of fragments thundered down
From Rosa's awful summit in the clouds,
To rot as moss-grown ruins harmless here.
There Gressonay her broader vale expands
In fissured swales mown bare as fresh reaped fields
By the keen glacier-draught that reaps all day,
But all reapers-like sleeps at the night-fall
And till sunrise sleeps ; while wide lower slopes
Yield's Italy's fruits to warm Italian suns
For rude Teutonic strangers lingering there
Mayhap from ancient forays long forgot.
Fleet-footed brooklets, nurslings of the hills,
Run prattling from their nurses down each vale,
Gurgling to night and day a wordless song ;
And other tortuous vales unfurl their folds,
D'Ayas, Tournanche, Pelline, and nameless more,
That fan-like ray towards every vagrant wind,
Towards Greek Marseilles and Lyons' silken mart ;
Geneva, dear to Calvin and Voltaire,
Of creed and cavil the unaureoled saints ;
Towards Nurnberg old, and Munich new by art ;
The sea-queen Venice, Turin, lair of kings ;
And that low Mediterranean wave,
Where boy Columbus oared his baby skiff,
Upon its tamer billows nursing heart
To dare the wild Atlantic's unsailed surge,

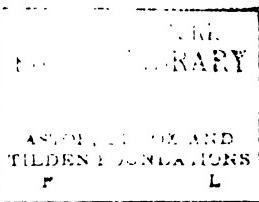
And seeking old worlds hap to find a new;
Towards Como's castled shores, Maggiore's isles,
Bright with camelias, murmurous with doves,
And Milan, whose still white cathedral walls
Resent the whiter snow-lifts of these hills.

III.

WITH NATURE.

BUT what a sight for men of burgs and glebes !
Such mighty circumstance, imperial pomp
Out-vieing all they boast of rich and great !
Intolerable commonplace disdained,
And costliest majesties made friendly !
The high brought low, the low sunk to the abyss !
The haughty mountains leveled with the eye !
The earth-despising clouds beneath one's feet
Confounded with the fields they still contemn !
The solid dome of firmament, that seemed
To roof this crest, dissolves to breathing air,
And breathing æther late one's native air
Thickens below into a lucent sea
Spread in blue bays and gulfs of atmosphere,
Where wave the trees as trailing water-weeds,
Wherein men rove as fish in denser seas,
And seek their food to find it in their kind,
And feel life dear, full of a changeful charm,
And loathe to leave it, loving all its ways.





A universe reversed ! heavens new, new earth
Bosomed in peacefulness and sunny sleep !
Mid-winter here, with tropic summer yon !
A long, long fall of ever-falling line !
A fairy world of snow-peaks pale with height,
And glacier-jeweled, draped with fog ;
With soldier pines that sentinel the crags,
And ambuscade the gorges, whose gnarled arms
Catch out at every vagabond of cloud
Found loitering in their camps ; hamlets faint
Between long tongues of glacier, perched so high
It seems their villagers must live in heaven ;
So steeply slant, their farms one day must slide
With crop and châlet to the crouching vales ;
And rarely lodged on some out-thrusting ledge
The pious chapel set, trace of man's pain ;
The swooning lowlands as a garden rolled ;
The sheeted lakes, the soundless waterfalls,
And litter of gray shingle everywhere !

One broods o'er all in silence nigh to death,
Scarce breathing lest the magic spectacle
Like sleep-spun dreams dissolving fade and pass,
And leave an old horizon long outworn,
Wherein his life seems wasted heretofore.
The formless air with twinkling ripples stirred
Its shimmering ether pours around the whole,
Gold, amber, azure, russet, emerald, pearl,
All colors blended in its quivering films,
That smooth the rough, and make the savage fair,

Weaving the mazy interrupted lines
Of thwarted range, and much-perplexed ravine
In one vast complex of grand harmonies,
Where every chaos melts to cosmic grace.

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Not great Beethoven riding on the blasts
Of his melodious passion at its height
More graciously doth blend his storm of sound,—
Its swelling angers, its pathetic pains,
Its trumpet tones of triumph dying off
To strains of peace wherein the soul finds God,—
Than greater Nature sways this rocky storm,
This hideous turbulence, and barren wreck
Of shattered continent to symphonies
Ethereal, majestic, wild, serene,
One grand full music of harsh discords born.
Drifts o'er the whole the cloud-fleets stately throng,
In silence deep as that of midnight skies,
So undisturbed that all a picture seems,
And we the painted men impassively
For figures on the out-rolled canvas set.

Far spins that truant ball our whilom earth!
A little length, such as a man might pace
Within an idle hour upon the plain,
Hath raised us up to some celestial realm,
Whence we look strangely down upon this globe
As on an exile planet swinging clear
Its rounded ball in airy space beneath;
Some nearer moon through telescope descried,

A stranger orb, and foreign to our feet ;
Though vaguely deem we still that once we knew
Its scenes, and lived its troubled citizens,
In days long gone, and wearily forgot.

But what is this lighter than infant's breath
No mist, nor voice, nor viewless herald's touch,
Yet sure some Presence rare, impalpable,
Through void skies leaning towards the skyey peak,
Which streams, a spectral form diaphonous,
Above the high-piled ranges near and far,
The sunless deep defiles, and farthest stretch
Of copious distance, to the cloudy verge
Of bounded space ? Fainter than zephyrs blow,
Breathe its divine enchantments o'er the scene
Dimming bright reason's eyes and crooning thought
Asleep.

Is it the Genius of the hill ?
The Spirit of the peak, who ne'er descends
To disenchanted leas, but here at home
A dainty Ariel and delicate
Sways glimmering, wavering, whispering everywhere ?

Phantom elusive, general, questionless !
Divine World-Spirit ! undetermined Power !
Soul of things visible, in dumb response
To soul invisible in us,— a life
Out-breathing from vast Nature in her wilds !
Great Pan, the leopard-mantled Pan, who made
Among the reeds such music, blinding-sweet

When men were artless children ! Faintly falls
His breeze-born voice abroad unsyllabled,
Scarce heard above the heart-beats, and yet seems,
Like lost friends risen in dreams, about to speak
And utter precious mysteries untold
To any mortal since the world began.
The strained ear listens reverently subdued ;
Savage or saint, savant or callous man
Of shrewd affairs, or he whom life has drained
Of all sweet fearfulness, alike lends heed.

A messenger and message comes unsought,
A phantom touch plays lightly on the sense,
A brush of ghostly wings invisible
Makes rustle near the heart ; the mountain god
Seems nearing his high seat ; and deeply moved
With ancient Hebrew steeped in Nature's faith
One looks up to the hills as thrones of help ;
Or with wild Aryan warriors, kindred old,
Discerns in peerless white Himalaya
A Brama's shining home with His strong gods ;
Or half believes, even late as yesterday,
With oft-defeated guides that Spirits hold
Untaken the keep of frowning Matterhorn,
While that stark rock beat all vain climbers back.

And still a God ! a God ! rapt feeling cries ;
He hovers round the awful peak ; his throne
Is its white splendor, his retreat its pure
And hoary solitude ! Hence he bears sway.

His face makes beauty in that formless air,
His hand weaves splendors of that flimsy mist,
He builds a magic into crag and glen,
And with His living presence cunningly
Blends scene and seer to one accordant joy.
So trembling through the landscape, like a sun
That breaks in drizzly dawn on ice-mailed trees
And glances down the crystal forest-ways
A thousand suns yet no well-outlined orb,
This magic Presence faint and fugitive
Glints coyly from the prospect everywhere,
With dew-drops' fleeting beauty, morning-sweet—
A flash of godhood ever, never God,
Who still withdraws his Person unrevealed.

Of old, beholders drunk with Nature's wine
New-mounting to their brutish brains in fumes
Of fear and fancy, helplessly confused
Saw all things double to their swimming eyes ;
And guessing spirit in each mold of form,
Found mighty gods and glorious enough
In the pale spectres of an unseen world.
Dyaus, dim Kronos, Zeus first-born of Time,
Osiris, gray-cloaked Odin, Ahriman,
Bright-haired Apollo, Pallas wise, rough Mars,
Dew-bearing Dawn on mead-besprinkled steeds,
Gods, Demons, Spirits thronging earth, and sky,
Till men were crowded hard by these poor ghosts ;
And plain meek Earth, creature of climes and soils,
Curtailed of honest powers and homely use,

Crazed with dense consecrations, confiscate,
Was closed to man by jealous pieties.
Then he went groping for the rainbow's gold,
Or beggar, at deaf shrines stood hat in hand,
Or prayed the gods where frankest elements
Their mightier service proffered unperceived.

Would Gods were present ! How would doubters soon
Give them fair greeting and high reverence due !
They have no churlish scorn for deities.
And were 't not cheap enough for living Gods
To break the silence, show their faces clear ?
But none comes nearer, never one breaks through,
Nor lifts the impenetrable veil ; no word
Of theirs drifts plainly through the insensate noise ;
A goodly world unhaunted, out-of-doors
Lies in sufficing loveliness ; no more !
The vagrant voice is but a droning breeze,
A sea-shell's murmurous nothing, errandless.
Such useless sound divine Prometheus heard,
And deemed a god's voice,—blinded by his rage,
When chained on Caucasus, as fire to flint,
He cursed and groaned, and waiting some new god
To loose him wretched, ate his great heart out,
The while he dreamed Zeus' vulture battened on it.
Now is his strong-limbed Hercules a name
For windy oaths, and his tormentor Zeus
With all his brilliant compeers, left for dead,
See now no victim on their altars burned ;
No longer sit their councils on the hills,

Nor flash their forms beneath the impassive sun,
Nor stoop they now to heroes hot with fight,
Nor from the cave breathe crafty oracles.
But pushed by genial science in her quests
From reverend haunts whereof their hearts were fain
They cease to be descried from height or depth,
Withdrawn indignant to the farthest star;
Or suffering that "Gods' Twilight" prophesied
At Ragnarok, now wait to hear their doom
At wise, impartial Nature's judgment seat
To stand or fall as her decree shall say;
But leave the earth to man and man's desires.

So vainly strain our opened eyes, our ears
As vainly hearken; thick, tremulous mists
Float round the silent Isis still close-veiled,
Nor open through to Deity whom none
By searching thus finds out; still vainly beat,
As butterflies their fickle-spotted wings,
Our rainbow hopes against the mail of secrets;
The Mysteries keep their fateful visors closed
On peak and plain, nor write their legend out
On rock or temple anywhere; and still
They challenge each new-comer, what reply
His life or lips may frame respecting them,
While they deny their tongues the telling, yea,
Or nay, concerning human destiny;
And like the dead keep silence unperturbed.

And yet the charm remains; the visual spell
Weaves sweet delusions round the willing sense,

As round the swaying cobra with his reeds
The wily Indian weaves a thrall of sounds.
The disillusioned mountains keep their state;
Eyes dew with tears beholding, raptures thrill
To pain; soft silence brushes babbling tongues;
The beautiful, sea-like immensity
O'erpowers our souls with longing vague, and sweet.
We cease from thought, and shade our mortal brows,
Our eyes are not attempered to such light,
Our hearts not strung to such large harmonies.
The two-fold glory of the earth and sky
Far-stretching to their one horizon line
Subdues us utterly; we seem unfleshed .

Like the long-pinioned frigate-bird that lives
On wing, nor tires, nor sleeps o'er bitterest mains,
The strong Imagination spreads her plumes
For one immortal flight o'er all eye sees,
And all unseen beyond, as far as where
New stars are born and life springs fresh from death,
In hope to sight the last infinity:
In vain! her pinions droop while yet she hangs
Above the threshold; e'en astronomic spaces
Are too wide; but when all space and endless time
Stretch their far bournes beyond to claim
The ambitious voyager, he turns dismayed;
Mid-heaven fails his strength, falters his stroke;
Disquieted, disheartened, breathless, thought
Can only gasp, whence came all this, and why,
And whither goes, and what shall be its end,

And ours who ask? And get no word returned
From earth out-rolled, nor ocean's travelled wave,
Nor star-wise heaven, nor night, nor past of time,
Nor man's bold mind with its increasing powers.

Yet baffled thought still chafing restlessly
Beats with bruised hands its fatal ignorance,
With vague surmises sad and discontent;
Then takes the wings of morning, and away
O'er the lone ether coasts the empty shores
Of landless continents by no eye seen,
In search of some strong Maker still believed
To dwell in utmost Thule, could one reach
That never-anchored isle beyond the dawn;
Fair as a mirage hangs it on the sky,
Decoying seekers with alluring hopes
Of finding some day what all days not show,
But what in mountain vista seems to lie
Upon the far horizon certainly.
Till men cry "Full surely waits He somewhere,
Let us soar again; Behold! his garments wave,
He gestures through the heavens, He unveils,
And lets his face beam yonder,—there, at last."
Such transport working fever in the brain,
Out of its rapture molds the Face it sought
When tired thought exhausted falls to rest
And sleeps.

So slept sage Merlin at the feet
Of sorceress Vivian, tranced in charm
Of his own spells, nor knew his folly proved.

So Nature ! with thy strong enchantments, thou
Hast all thy will of us thy tenantry !
Infatuate with thy loveliness we ache
To touch thy very face, to kiss thy lips,
To take thy hand, to stroke thy winsome cheek,
And know thee utterly,—a living love.
But unconcerned thou dost elude us still,
Or keep us at a distance half-estranged,
And though we be thy cunning chemistry,
Engendered in thy subtleness, and feel
Thy genial throb of being in each pulse,
Yet never close we with thee perfectly,
Our unavailing passion, chilled and balked
By thy neglectful sweet indifference ;
Though still like doting children must we love,
And bless thee our enchanter, till we die.

So lightly dost thou hold us, that so cool
Thy custom, and demeanor, Nature ! that
No more than for dumb beast, or fragrant flower,
Thou dost concern thyself for us, forlorn !
Yet to ourselves we seem thy master work,
Thy crown, and jewels in thy crown, so high
That o'er thyself in swelling syllables
We proudly vaunt, and boasting make loud claim
To rank out-ranking thy nobilities,
To higher lineage, diviner gift,
And end excelling thine, as sun the stars ;
Whilst thou with calm untroubled irony
Dost smile, nor heed our claim, but treat us still

As wayside accidents, as summer flies,
Whom thy first frost shall pinch to nothingness.

So small are we indeed and vain ! to whom
These trifling ranges of repeated ridge,
These trivial knolls seem mighty, lying here
A mower's swath, a weathered windrow raked
Upon the uncumbered rondure of large earth ;
Or rank of haycocks waiting for the wain
On the good farmer's closely-shaven mead.
The shortness of our stature's measuring-ell
Is guilty of their mightiness to us,
As his slight body makes his bushel-heap
To the atom-ant an ample hill; whereon
His grand affairs transacted ripen apace ;
But easily our girdled globe doth roll
Its circle full, and smooth, though roughened thus
By these huge jutting promontories
Within its orb, as rolls an orange true
Upon its wrinkled rind ; our littleness
Makes them so great. Insects in space are we,
By our own globe and habitation dwarfed
To crickets on its rugose continents,
That chirp their shining summer hour, and cease.
Our Earth itself is but a paltry star,
Compared with Sirius, or one Pleiad-point,
Or any nightly visible orb, and swings
A firefly-round, unnoticed mid the spheres.
Insects of bounded space, and straitened time
Are we, to whom these hills eternal seem,

So old their recent day, so fixed their crags,
That still with rapid waste consume their strength,
And show their hoar antiquity to be
But as one hasty bar upon the score
Of that eternity, whose centuries
Fall like a transient music from the sky.
While we, brief notes blown from a bugler's horn
Blare once upon the silence and are done.

But small or large, what matter ! what we are,
We are. Cares the housed tortoise in his shell
That he is yet nor hare, nor swallow fleet ?
Still bound our nerves with exultations, hopes ;
Still breathe we this high air with rapture, still
See earth dilated to a palace large,
Roofed with blue bravery of the cloud-sailed sky,
Lit by the prodigal lustres of the sun,
Dowered with fair climes, enringed with silver surge
House of all plenty, grandeur, loveliness,
Where children play and manhood finds its stage,
Bounteous to countless tribes of happy men,
That crowd its continents, and sail its seas.

O Earth ! too little prized, too little praised !
Too much absorbed in men man lives untouched
By thy processional and stately calm,
And beats his soul down with mean drudgeries
That bring no strength nor lead to ampler life.
And still thou liest smilingly content
Unsmitten by contradiction and unvexed,

Thy lowlands rich with gentle potencies,
Thy hills uplifted like a fairy's boon,
And without words dost call us, offering
Not grain alone but gladness in thy hands,
With virtue, glory and colossal power.
Thou hast more spirits for us than the graves ;
Thy elements are all alive and wise ;
They bring more slaves than could Aladdin's lamp ;
Each slave is truthful, honest, faithful, shrewd ;
Each sleepless, swift and strong and honorable ;
Puck and his company were slow to them ;
Samson or Hercules weak ; Oberon gross ;
Titania rude, and all that men have dreamed
Is poverty with their rich wonders matched.

A still returning Sibyl thou dost bring
Thy volumes with thee newly, and who reads
Will find the springs of magic hidden there,
And gifts of such delightsomeness, that years
Shall bring him transports, while the vanished Gods
Seem re-disclosed to him, and dædal earth,
Enough without a better heaven ; for him
Comes each new day a fairy prince to kiss
His lips, and waken him to larger life,
Bring him the royal sun, the pensive moon,
The galaxy of stars, the rolling change
Of seasons old as sea, sweet fluctuant airs,
The immeasurable laws so still, so strong,
And back of law the teasing mystery
Of universal being ; all rich gifts

To draw him out of stony moods of gloom,
To fill his days with hours of beaten gold,
To touch his nature with the strength of hills,
To cool his brow with freshness of blithe morns,
To give his mind the large horizon's span,
And to his heart the peace of strength and truth.
Such dreams salute us on this air-clipt top,
And beacon of the habitable world ;
Our souls make forth to generous novelties ;
We rend the withes of custom, rise and fall
Infuriate on the coarse Philistine hordes
Of low desire, stale prudence and mean use,
Cry havoc to sad creeds, dull saws, harsh bigotries
And all the tyrannies of stupid time
And spring to seize our natural liberties.
Beyond the moon's flight, fly our soberest thoughts
Across the azure vault ; no breezy cloud,
Nor yon unmastered eagle sailing lone,
Whose seldom-striking pinions fan the winds
Of farthest continents, while he not recks
What land swims small beneath him, soars more free.

Us now, repentant skeptics, takes some god ;
Our blood runs wild like those who, drunk with wine
Danced madly in the ancient Mysteries,
And whirled in Maenad rout, and cried aloud
Evoe, Bacche ! ah, Evoe, hail !
And felt the god suffusing every sense
That with the orgy all of self expired.
For we are drunk with Nature at her feast,

Account ourselves the genii of the peaks ;
We call to Lyskamm, Breithorn, Matterhorn,
To Weisshorn in the distance, Mischabel,
And every shining summit far and near,
To hail them as our brothers, living parts
Of great organic nature, one with us .
And like that chained Prometheus on his rock,
We cry, " O Mountain strong, and ye gray Mists
And swift-winged Breezes, and far-flashing Seas,
All-seeing Sun, and Earth our Mother dear,—
Primeval gods in the white dawn of man,—
We keep with you this day a revelry,
Ancestral, not Semitic, Aryan pure,
And to us Aryans kin, as at your shrines
We worship with the souls of cousins gone,
Who, living once as now we live, still found
In you their strength, their knowledge, and their joy ;
Admit us to your powerful mysteries ;
Give us command of all your mighty laws,
To love your music-martialed pageantry,
The large procession of your secular things,
Your passions, pleasures, wisdoms, disciplines ;
To quaff all beakers your sane hand shall fill
And with you feast delighted, till the end,
When we lie down beneath you unconcerned."

As some worn saint from penances released,
And floating out of tortured flesh to God,
Draws gladly near the imperishable dawn
Whose gracious hope invites the holy dead,

So borne in mountain ecstacy afar
From scourges, fears, and frenzies of sore time,
We gladly near through widening skies, the old,
The friendly, natural Powers imperishable,
That hold the round world to their firm embrace,
And bounds of being, as the Sun-god holds
The tethered planets to their heavenly rings.

IV.

THE DESCENT.

Of lonely nature is the mountain Queen
And savage moods seize on her ; not for long
Will she endure the tramp of mortal foot
On her intolerant crest ; but she will cry
The furies from her icy caves, and hound
The rash intruder forth, or shake him down
From off her neck as shakes a wind-tossed oak
The ripened acorns from its lashing boughs.
And though enraptured, men may not abide
On Monte Rosa's slender point, nor build
Their slighter tabernacles amid its clouds,
Plain-nurtured bantlings they the plain require.
The genial noontide dies to ugly night,
And night so near the stars is harsh with cold,
While shameless hunger coming, like a dun
To splendid palace doors, sues fretfully ;
For whom grows naught on this infertile spire.
One lingering here would find his frugal fare
Leaner than forage of starved grasshoppers

That cling to mullein seared by nipping frosts
Of late September to brown barrenness.

So now prosaic guides discreetly wise,
Up-gathering their small gear command descent.
And all the more that the low, lonely wind
Lifts to a louder key its drony hum,
Spinning a thread of snow from each slim spire,
That like a yachtsman's pennon streams abroad,
Of coming tempest harbinger, and flag.
Now urge foreboding guides the top of speed ;
In haste run all as from avenging gods
To that unshorn *Arête*, again to swing
Along its harrowing edge in lien of death,
And curse its raveled raggedness, with sighs
That flesh were harder or tall rock more soft.
Another lunacy, that grim descent,
Unlike good Vergil's facile grade to hell !
All npward perils doubly armed dispute
The way anew. Blindly the feet must grope
Below, unhelped of sight ; and painfully
The hands release the unwonted grasp above.
And while like seals on land they fumble on
With cumbrous care, like gliding seals at sea
The blackening clouds skim the ethereal wave,
Borne on more winds than Æolus held, that fall
Like hawks and kites, with furious beak and claw
Upon the mangled ridge, their ancient quarry
Still unconsumed through hungry centuries ;

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ASHER KNOX AND
TIDEN FOUNDATIONS

P

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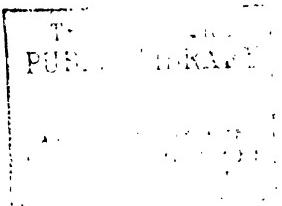
Nor give they heed to those poor human mice,
That creep in mortal danger down its face. .

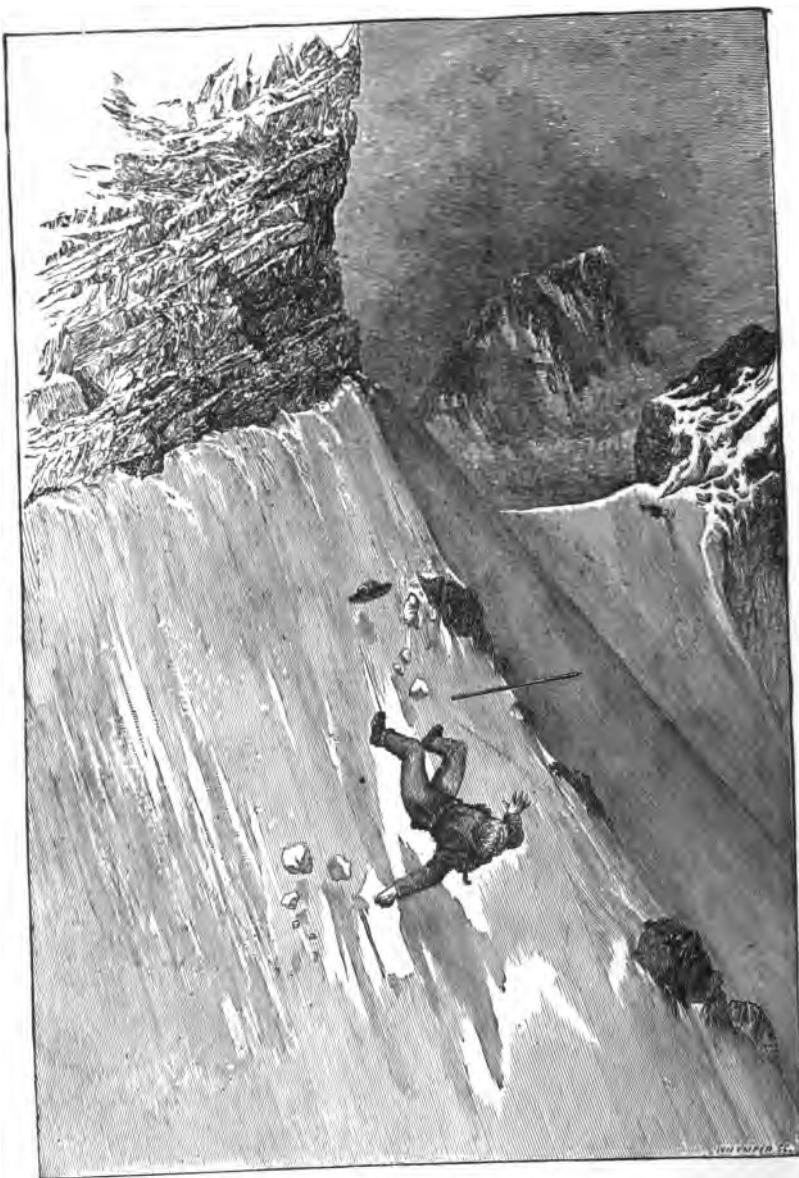
And what a place for men in such a war
Of howling elements! an ice-glazed saw
Of crag, whereon the sturdy mountain goat
For all his climbing were afraid! A gale
Would pluck the ruffled falcon from his perch,
Or plunge the windy crow down leagues of sky!
Three miles of storm-swept space above the round
And general globe, with but this untrimmed spar,
This stony topmast of the good ship "Earth"
To cling by. E'en the night-wrapped sea-boy swung
On switching yards when yeasty waves boil high
And drench the humming cordage, has less cause
To sigh for hearth-stone; since driving clouds
Denser than smoke of Sheol whirl along
To make a mid-day night without a star.
Flies the pale snow; loud roar near avalanches;
Smites the strong lightning with its forgeless sword
Upon the unflinching crag till mighty shards
Boom out through air and carrom loudly down;
While every nerve is stirred, as surly Death
Had looked all in the face and spoken them foul.

Now life's sweet wine to gall and wormwood turns
The beauteous day deforms her shining face
And hides a withered crone beneath the skies;
The mountain vanishes in mist,—clean gone;
All landmarks disappear; all sight cut off
The wide world narrows to an eagle's roost;

Home seems a dream of what has never been ;
In the fierce focus of the tempest hid
The men are left alone, they and the storm.
Chilled, blinded, sore, hands freezing, freezing feet,
They wrap that hateful twist of stone about
As spider wraps his thread with his six legs ;
And now from anchored axe, by rope they swing,
Now scramble mid loose shingle glazed with sleet,
Now make a stairway of an icicle.
And ever and anon the guide screams loud
Above the roaring wind "Take care, don't haste;
Take time!" and strains the loosening line from slack.
But if some bungler trips, again he shrieks,
"For Heaven's sake, care! In God's name, slow!"
While louder screeds the gale, and fans the *Arete*
With mile-wide wings, that beat them dumb and deaf.
Silent they grope as men by danger cowed,
And lonely in a mist that blots the world
From view and almost from expectancy.

Yet soon grown wonted rallies youth's light heart,
Turns all to chaff and laughs within the storm;
Thinking a fine adventure comes his way
To make him hero of some winter's tale.
But angry nature brooks no fopperies.
And one raw tyro trifling airily
Jostles his shoulder on a tooth of crag,
Bends slipping side-wise, throws his staff in air,
Looses his poise, and staggers to the verge
That looks towards Lyskamm, where the rock cuts down





One clean straight fall a thousand yards below;
Once o'er that brim and scarce Mercury's wings
Could save from Pluto's ever joyless fields.
But not the ready word, which that wild drudge,
The lightning runs with, flies more swift than bounds
The instant guide, his life flung on the risk,
To clutch the luckless stumbler as he reels;
And bending all his lustihood to strain
With one great lurch of his full-muscled arm
Swings him across the knife-edge like a babe;
And since no friendly foothold lends him perch
He falls, or with a fearful courage leaps
Down the opposing wall, less precipice,
Where runs the northern face—an ice-roof steep
To deadly pits an instant's slide below.
There flash they on—a double meteor
Scarce seen, when gone, towards that infernal brink,
Where calmly waits the primal Nihilist.

But now the cool-brained Swiss, shrewd mountaineer,
Knit to his man with clutch of hawk to fowl,
Bites his sharp axe-point in the frozen plane
Till the good steel hangs in its deepening groove
And checks their flight in mid destruction stayed.
One moment's work, no more! but moment bold,
And glancing like a bubble with all hues
Of mortal fate. The Fury raised her shears
To cut the thread—but checked the sudden blades,
Till later,—spinning on a handful more
Of life's enchanting years, which still should cease.

Now roped back trembling to the bridge of crag
They re-commence their blind-fold journeying,
And reach at last the bosses of new snow
Whence the *Arête* springs forth its grizzly spine
Like some sea-monster's fossil skeleton.

But not exhausted are great Rosa's toils.
Since safe the men have fled thus far, enraged
She plots to take them in her craftiness.
And first the starry snow-fall thickening
She wraps the hill with pitchier cloud like night
Till all direction hid they grope as blind.
Then fearing most the southern precipice
They bear to eastward over trackless wastes,
Their only clue to hold the downward trend.
Unknown gulfs, strange crags out-starting from the
clouds
Distress the anxious guides; till angered all,
Each blames the other, each in rage usurps
The lead, to prove in rage his impotence.

What lurking peril hangs about the skirts
Of every high Alp e'en when skies are clear!
But driving mist makes hazard imminent;
And as a polyp in his sea-caves hides
Till spoil floats by, then lashes out an arm
As lightning swift to snatch his prey,—so lies
An Alpine danger close, till victim nears
Then flashes out like fire, and whirls him off
To wounds or death.

This chances now, for tired
Of drifts, one heady, lithe American
Attempts to shorten space by swift glissades,
And gaining headway down a growing steep,
The racer-pace confusing him, ere long
He loses poise, and rolling heels o'er head
Collects the snow before him till he spins
Along a petty avalanche, himself
The heart and centre of a dusty cloud
That shooting out of sight is lost in fog.



Then shouts a guide but no reply returns ;
No sound but drive of wind and sleet, till heart
Stand still and breath is scarcely drawn.

Another shout, that summons answer none !
Then leader Hermann—man of silent ways,
A leather-muscled Switzer, faithful, bronzed,
Who oft cried warning,—rapidly slides down
Upon the lost man's track, within the mist ;

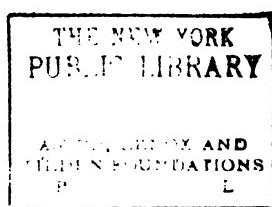
While they stand waiting, heart in mouth, until
His cry comes muffled from the void, "Crevasse !
Crevasse !" And no one speaks awhile ; but all—
And chief the Swiss who best the peril know,—
Stare round upon each other with wide eyes,
And paling cheeks and nameless thoughts of dread,
Then break to cry confused, that blends the wail
Of human fear with fearless wailing winds.
And one shrieks out "O God ! the man is lost!"
While they go scrambling down the chasmed ice,
And group about the fissure, clinging fast
Like sea-weed to a rock in swash of surf.

Now on their faces falls the glacier's breath,
And in their eyes there smites the bright fierce gleam
Of its two seamless walls, that stretch away
To darkness fathomless, and still reveal
No trace of their lost friend, but now so near;
Dropped from their company, as minutes drop
From heedless hours, he seems clean gone as they.

Then listening down they call and listen again
With straining ears that nothing hear, unless
One muffled groan that steals obscurely up
Be moan of pain and not the insensate moan
Of the rending glacier's ruffled indolence.
Thick is the glacier with millennial snows,
Deep the crevasse as to earth's centre cloven,
So deep the man may lie, that their slim gear
May fail to sound his hiding.



CREVASSÉ.



But soon roped
They swing bold Hermann down the abyss, who sinks,
And like the fishing sea-gull 'neath dark waves,
Strikes out to right and left with rapid touch,
While with keen eye he searches every nook,
Each bend, each chamber, every narrow ledge,
Burning to see what still meets not his gaze.

His ice-axe serves him well for hands and feet
Where both unarmed were vain as straws ; and now
So far within that bottomless profound
He gropes, that twilight fails in frosty glooms
Where prowls he fumbling like a man gone blind,
Till the blue glacier's heart benumbs his limbs,
The night and silence terrify his thoughts,
And black dismay steals over him, while scarce
He seems alive even to himself, or more
Than empty ghost upon the shores of Styx,
Awaiting that grim ferryman's sad oar
To hell. Then all at once the ill-joined rope
Slips through its knot and lets him drop like stone
Within the fissure.

Whither fallen ? where stayed ?

But those who hold their idle watch above,
Feeling the tense rope slacken, know their hopes
Destroyed as flowers by frost, since two are gulfed,
Both slain perhaps or wedged below the reach
Of succor, where they freeze away their lives
Unheeding aught that lately made them glad.

For half the cord, the sole resource of help,
 Is gone whence prayers nor charms may call it forth.
 Useless it hangs, the rest as useless held
 By those above, who sit there paralyzed,
 Feeling a horror of great darkness fall
 As on the sleeping song-birds falls the owl
 Devouring happy broods and songs unsung.

But instantly the second guide, Johann,
 Leans down so far within the gulf, that one
 Lays hold of him lest he too fall,—and shouts
 “O, Hermann, are you hurt ?” and gets reply,
 Though faint and late, “Not hurt ; but help !”

Then knots

Johann the half-line round him and descends
 To find its utmost far above the strait
 Where Hermann sticks fast-wedged in the crevasse
 Which there constricts its broad rapacious mouth
 To such a throat as hugs a man’s girth close ;
 Nor can the twain draw near, but float apart
 Like unapproaching worlds in unbridged space.

And now a wonder shows in that choked air,
 The savage Mountain Queen of vengeance sure,
 Exulting o’er her victims, parts her clouds
 A lane as wide as ship’s wake on the brine,
 And like a white Archangel charged with wrath,
 Looks towering down on their amazed distress ;
 Her ice-clad spires in such a sunshine bathed
 As makes her crown gleam one translucent pearl,

For triumph worn o'er man's defeated pride.
An awful glorious rebuke she seems ;
Yet thus foredooms defeat, since one stray shaft
Loosed from the friendly sun shoots arrow-like
Through the dim moat, and shows at once where hangs
Poor Hermann though unhurt, a prisoner.
Whom sighting thus, Johann forsakes his rope,
And braced with hand and knee on either wall
Works his way down, regains the line, re-mounts,
Rejoins the cords, draws Hermann loose, half-dead
From his slow icing in that blistering crib.
Now both resume the unrewarded search ;
Though Rosa as alarmed recalls her clouds
To shed old terrors round her enemies,
Till in the glimmering moat a smoky light
Scarce breaks the gloom.

But peering sharply round

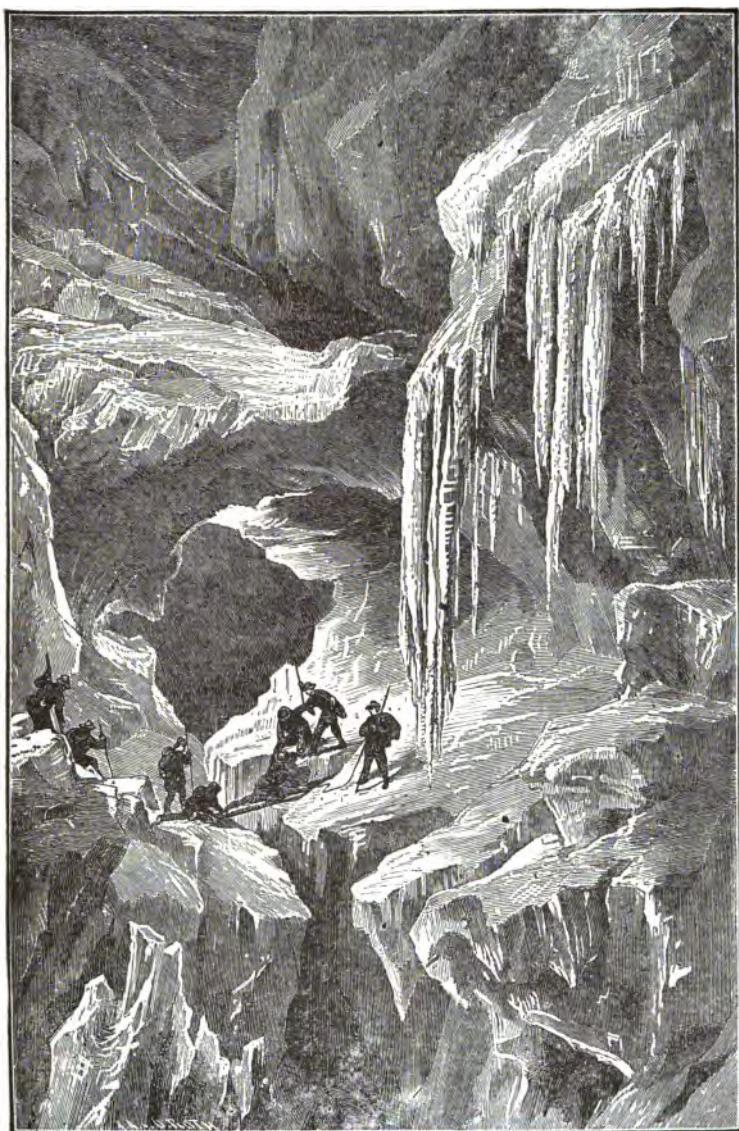
At last they stumble on a shallow cave
Where erst some boulder lodged, whose leap below
Has left its niche—a glassy half-dome, void,
Arched low within the glacier's massiveness,
Here like an effigy upon a tomb,
His own hard fate rehearsing silently,
All stark and lifeless lay their late blithe mate.

Each way the long crevasse stretched out its chasm
And branching clefts put forth through thick rib'd ice
A spreading labyrinth of cool strange halls,
Where never blows rude wind, nor burns the sun,
Nor summer's sultry breath blights anything



Within its gateways; never footfall loud
Of wandering beast disturbs its corridors,
Nor man nor god moves stately through its courts;
The pale ghost-flowers of snow-flake bloom alone
Amid its avenues, and from its walls
Depend stalactites alabaster-pale;
Dumb silence reigns save for mist-falling rills
That tinkle on the ledges faintly sweet.
But dwellers there lie dreamlessly composed,
Nor ever rouse to hail the glimmering day,
Nor toss with pain at night, nor know wan care,
Nor ever strive for mastery, nor gnaw
Their lips for greed, nor yearn with love's desire;
But them the soothing hand of sleep lulls fast
In slumbers soft as flow of lowland stream,
Wherein all rumors of the restless world
Are hushed as birds at night; here they recline
On marble couches fit for haughty kings,
Nor long for home or any change from sleep.

And there untroubled lay their friend entranced,
Nor thought of danger, nor for life had care,
But lapped in sweet forgetfulness drew near
The doors of parting crossed of all men's feet.
And him the drifting moments tranquilly
Swept leaf-like forward on the noiseless road,
While at his head invisible sat One,
His nurse, who gave him drafts of poppy thick
With slumber thrice-distilled; how patiently
His prostrate form endured the frozen snow,



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One arm depending down in vacancy
And face o'erhanging that unbottomed abyss !

Fair shone that sepulchre as silver wrought,
And fair the young wan face profoundly still,
But nathless raised the guide such cry distrest,
As echoing through that silent realm might start
Its guardian spirit from his rigid watch.
And when his comrades leaning down the gulf,
Heard that cry ringing in those depths of hell,
They blenched as men to whom a lion roars
About their watchfire in the torrid night,
Recalling how the brindled savage leapt
Last eve upon them, and snatched one away
To her red lair, and bloody-minded cubs.

Yet spite of all, Swiss courage holds unpaled ;
Though to all senses seemed the man as dead,
A closer scrutiny gave hope, the guess
That heart-beat lingered fluttering towards its close,
But showed life's ecstacy not wholly spent.
And this discovered what new ardors fire
The intrepid Switzers to bear life's reprieve !
What rapid energy, what pains, what skill,
What tireless muscle now they lend to hew
That icy coffin from the stiffened form !

Above, the rest left idle, dumb and frore,
Think wistfully of homes and blazing hearths,
Of plenteous cheer, of friends and welcomes warm,

Of glowing festal scenes in years gone by,
Compared with this bleak bivouac be-stormed;
And deep they wonder if old joys shall be
Their portion ever midst of living men.
Meanwhile the day grows haggard, the slow hour
Drags out a century its dreary length.
They can but sit and feel how callously
Light-hearted Nature plies her storm-play rude,
How mad and free the roystering elements
Push on their revel; how the meteor maze,
The gay Walpurgis dance, the orchestral crash
Aerial, all the wild, delirious storm
Make that white hill-side, pandemonium.
A million viewless sprites slide down the blasts,
And shout aloud, "Come play with us bold friends,
Our sport is rough, our company boisterous,
But ye are souls of daring which we love;
Come, take our buffets, meet us brow to brow,
Stand merrily against our game, and hold
Your own with us as comrades frolicsome.
What? no reply? we took you for our peers,
And spirits mated to the best; no? then
Stand on guard, for we shall try your pith; we
Deal with gamesters savagely, sparing none."
Then swoop they down like swift-winged kites on doves.

No shelter, food, nor saving gleam of fire,
Nor any trodden way where kindly folk
Might pass, nor hands of help; protection none,
Nor mercy; all in vain a piteous cry

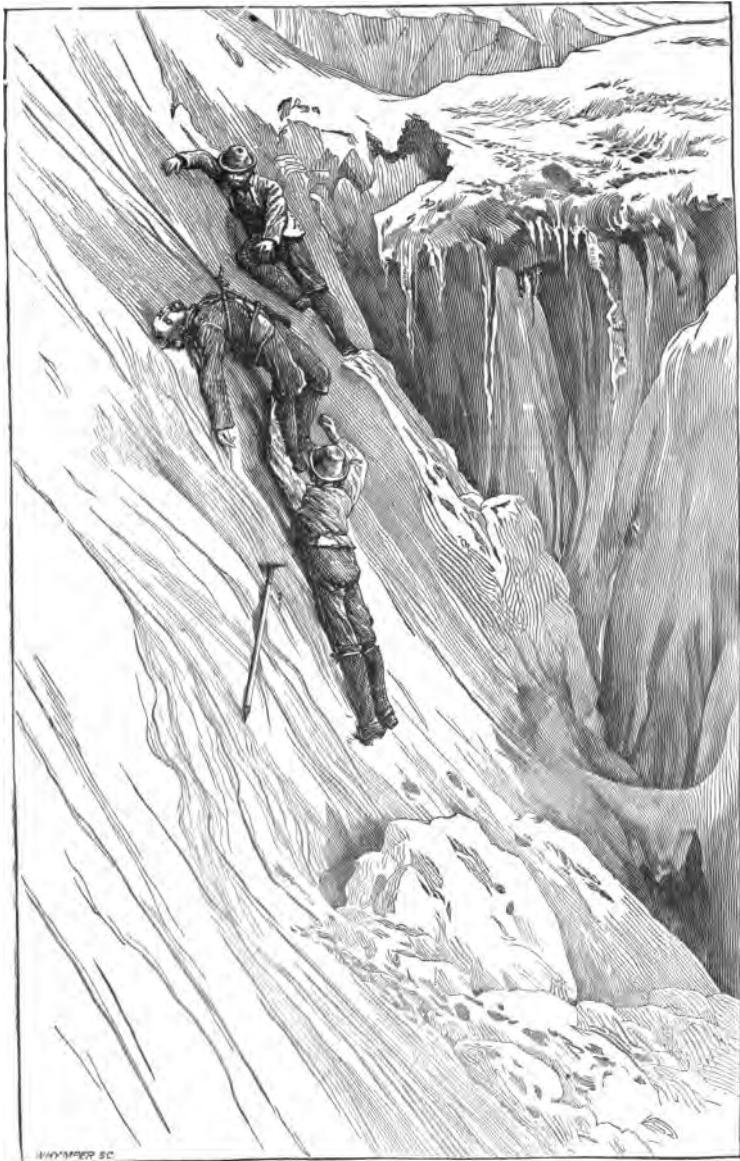
For respite ; law-obeying heavens, and winds
Unspent must keep their ordered course though half
The sphere fell victim to their energies.
In vain men's late repentance that as fools
They left the summer fields where all the land
Lay blooming at their feet, to tempt this rock,
To try conclusions with a wilderness
Whose breath was blasting, and whose blight was death.
In vain their imprecations ! vain their wrath !
Their fortitude in vain ! and vain their cry
Dismayed, "Spare, Nature ! spare, dear mother, spare !
Call off these murderers, whose dancing sport
Will slay us, Nature ! us, even us, thy pride,
Thine offspring, lovers, worshippers." But storms
Are deaf and boisterous winds are blind ; sheer Power,
Almighty ruinous Power inscrutable
Lends no one pity or unearned reprieve.
And regal Nature, from her throne exclaims,
"Spare you ? and why ? I called you forth from night,
I brought you up at mine own costs to this,
Lent you a meed of strength, delight, and life,
Which now I but re-call ; you shall sleep well,
Wrapped in your garments of wind-woven snow ;
I can as easily draw others forth
To this sweet being as keep you ; and they
Shall share my light, my joy, and love me well,
And please me for a day, and then be soothed
To old unconsciousness, and sleep ; and you
Could hardly live forever, then be still
And make for others room."

"And art thou thus?

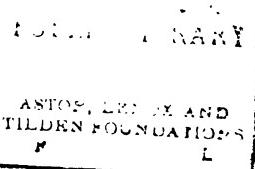
Then human hands shall save, nor churlish Death
Raise his confounding pæan o'er our slain."
Then hacking with remorseless energy,
Against the icy shroud that swathes their friend
At last they free his body, lying inert,
A dreamless prisoner, whose poisoned sleep
Still deepening deathwards darkens with the day.

And now they pluck him forth as shepherd plucks
A wounded kid from wolf's ensanguined jaws,—
A woeful mockery of him who passed
This way beneath the sunrise scarce more bright
Than his irradiate face; now left in pause,
Upon the bitter marge of that dun wave
Whereon fell never yet the shadowing
Of backward-beating sail, since time bore man.

What boots it now that artist-Nature shows
Her utmost grandeurs in such majesty,
When through her tented highlands uncontrolled
That old moss-trooper Death scours every nook
With his ferocious brigands at his heels?
Have travelers any comfort anywhere?
Ice, precipice, and avalanche, the wind,
Black night, night's cold, the fog, and bursting rock,
All these are death's dread armament and war!
What well-stored arsenal the outlaw keeps,
How practiced in his weapons, quick to slay!
And what boot grandeurs to their lovers slain?—



H. HAMMER SC



Yet carelessly comes man to meet death here;
Perhaps because his life's a duel every day;
And trained to arts of fence in youth he learns
To pit his rapier of glancing thought
Against death's bludgeons without fear of foil;
For he has won so many a desperate field
That earth's now his by conquest; his because
He never lowers his point, although full sure
To be the slain himself at last; but stands
To meet his end, still fencing, and die game.

And here the ancient duel sharply met
Shows human training stronger than the foe,
For tenderly they wrap their friend with coats
And bear his body to a covert snug
Beneath the lee of crag; then chaff his skin,
Force cordial down his throat, and beat his hands,
Till dawn-like, steals along his cheek a blush,
His eye-lids lose their gray, and twitch the lips
That ask, "Where am I? Did I fall? And was
I hurt?" While like a slug crawls back the soul,
Thought trembles forward toward reality,
Till friendship, love, and youth have all their will
And hideous danger snarling slinks away.

But storms hold not forever; and at last
This tempest falters, parts its thinning mists,
Call in its winds, rebukes the pelting sleet,
Rolls off the leaden phalanxes of cloud
That linger low and long and sullenly

Upon gray Rosa's summits; reappears
The courtly company of kingly hills,
So grand, so calm, so pure with innocence,
So like a royal murderer's lily hands
When in sweet morning dew washed stainless clean
After night's tragedy is done and hid.
Meanwhile what shades already dusk the valleys!
What tattered clouds tear draggling up the crags!
The greyhound Night hunts that swift hare the Day
To cover; and like some advancing gnome,
The Matterhorn's gigantic shadow stalks
Across the glacier, up great Rosa's scaurs.
The wounded comrade hinders speed where scarce
The carrier pigeon's flight were swift enough.
Soon fails the day; the stars come forth and make
Soft twilight on the snow; large are the wastes,
The heavens vast; while small as wrens the men;
But these prevail, make good their hope, and reach
The "Platte's" rock to find their lantern safe,
And now not far away they see new lights
Like fire-flies dancing o'er the glacier's wave;
'Tis help from Riffelberg which meets them soon
With food and cordials needed sore for all;
Then snatching hunter's lunch beneath the stars
They rise new-hearted, striding off alert
With swinging step as had they never tired,
Scarce glancing back, where sleeping tranquilly
Stands Rosa 'neath the starlight calm and pure,
Of wrath forgetful and our fugitives.
So they at last re-enter that low inn

Upon high Riffel's forehead, — far too spent
For joys or aught but weary passiveness;
But as a world-worn traveller home-returned
Recounts his life's adventures to old friends,
So they rehearse their story to the crowd
Chance-gathered round the blazing fire that cheers
The cozy guest-room of the friendly inn.
What shuddering memories thrill them as they talk!
Then once again they hear the roar of storm,
The clash of ice and drive of blinding sleet;
Again they search the depths of the crevasse
Where dwells perpetual twilight and pale sleep;
Again the rapturous moment of release
Is on them; then renewed night's dumb despair
Depresses every thought; and till late dawn,
Tossed in a troubled sleep, dark danger stands
Above their couches and repeats her fear.
And not for days can they behold the peaks,
Sublime in glorious beauty and wild strength,
Without a shudder of distress and sense
Of hate, that such fair-surfaced splendors should
Conceal such savageries and miles of death.

But when dim years have poured forgetfulness
And haze of romance on their suffering,
Returns the wondrous picture elfin-fair,
The grandeur unrevealed in any words.
That visual dream transcending frail report
Remains a treasure-trove, a fairy gold
Hid in the loneliest caverns of shy thought,

Not hoarded yet unshared ; for none but he
Whose startled eyes have seen can guess the sight
That rises like a mirage, heavenly clear,
Upon the inner vision silently,
Of phantom peaks dim with the silver light,
Of blinding snow-fields roofed with sapphire skies,
Of emerald pastures pierced by glaciers cold,
Of wrinkled crags sad with corroding years,
With streams of misty amethyst between,
Crowding the dream-horizon to its marge
With such a giant caravan that all
The living world before its face forgets
To be ; the phantom is reality.
And with it comes deep wistfulness, and pain
That such unwasted grandeurs still should stand
To bless beholders with unrivaled joy,
And we not there to see them all our days.

V.

PULVIS ET UMBRA.

SO MONTE ROSA stands, and so has stood
More years than there are sands within her stones;
And so may further stand unspent more years
Than there are crystals in her banks of snow;
But still the wolfish hours shall gnaw her crags,
The ravening elements that lurk in air
Tear at her spires, nor heed that driving rain,
Sleet, cold, sand-bearing wind, and sunshine's touch
Or lightning's blow but spoil what once they sped.
The riven rock continually wastes,
The Mount shall sink to hill, the hill to mound,
The oak shall grow where once the glacier groaned,
And where snow sparkled shall the snow-drop star
Chamois shall yield to sheep, and orchards bloom
Where now this iron rock stands desolate.
Our globe shall roll oblivious of each change
Till tribes of beasts and men lie down to sleep,
A general sleep unquestioning, and earth
As lifeless nod about the cooling sun

As does the half-seen moon round parent earth;
For all things haste to changing not to end;
One cycle dawns, but treading on its heel
A younger cycle thrusts it quickly forth,
To be in turn left dying by a third;
Or rather is no cycle but one time,
Whose rapid stream unparted ever flows;
Whose unit is eternity, of which
The minutes grow to hours, the hours to days,
And these to months, which swell to lapsing years,
Or loitering centuries that run their hare
And tortoise race to such high numerals
As e'en to think of dizzies memory,
Like poppy or mandragora. A mote
Seems man in such long reckonings, a gnat,
A microscopic atom, scarcely more
Than such o'er-joyed bacterium, as finds
An ocean in a drop of dew, or rolls—
A porpoise—in the watery film contained
Between two closely-pinioned glasses held
Illumined 'neath the lens of science, where
Some curious brain insatiate seeks the mode
And genesis of being in the least.

So runs creation's ceaseless race; naught ends
Save in a fresh beginning which grown old
Contracts, dilates, transforms its force to new,
Since all known ends are means to later ends
And each new step but as a ladder's rung
To base the step succeeding; for a day

Man stands to note the process, bold to call
One state important and another mean,
Though all alike dash on as runs a train
From town to country then to city loud,
But still away and on forever ; while
We marvel much beholding, Time's swift car
Drops each at his way-station and makes on.

And this our Mountain in whose fortressed strength
We take such pleasure yields her majesty
To that uneasy law which having glued
Her cliffs of loose sea-sand, the sport of every surge,
Now slowly wears the hardened adamant
To sand again and washes it to sea, nor stays
Mutations then, but onward drives,—a tide
That circles broad creation round and round
As drifting log about a whirlpool spun.

And who shall say what lies beyond save this ?
That some good future issuing from the mists
But no less beautiful because its works
Shall be all new and not the works of old
Shall follow with fresh mountains, grandeurs, men,
Through evolutions so munificent
That wildest hopes will look a beggar's alms
Compared with rich reality : fancy faints
And falls unequal on the inventive breast
And infinite of fact.

But o'er the stretch
And wold of endless time hath no man sight,
Nor any compass nor a certain guide.

Which matters little, since safe Nature holds
All in her powerful sequences, that run
If man know, or know not, and carry him
And his, on swift still wings to genial ends,
While each has his full share in glorious life.



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"Monte Rosa" has attracted much attention, and deservedly, through its extraordinary descriptive power. No one has ever put into more weird and picturesque language the whole range of Alpine nature, from

"The virgin snow
That slenderly leaps into kindred cloud
From the slim tip, the last of mortal earth,"

through all the terrible experiences of climbing and crevasse. There is often an incompleteness of line, reminding us of the tantalizing utterances of Ellery Channing; but Mr. Nichols, yet more than Mr. Channing, is sure presently to startle us with something so thoroughly poetic as to atone for innumerable sins, and it is certain that so much fine Alpine description was never before compressed into a single volume.—*N. Y. Nation.*

The descriptions of these mountains and of the whole panorama of Nature, which they open to the poet and man of science, are beyond Byron in "Manfred" or "Childe Harold," and can only be compared with Shakespeare, Lucretius and Aeschylus.

Here was a poet's eye and ear such as the author of the book of Job might have envied; and in this passage, too, the same great manner is negligently seen:

"And that unlettered time slipped on," etc.

—*Springfield Republican.*

The first characteristic which impresses the reader of this new poem, is the genuineness of its poetic inspiration. The poet sinks himself in his subject. We see and hear not him but only what he is describing. Another feature is the fact that the astonishing power, with which the poet starts, is sustained all through to the end. The excellence is uniformly high.

These quotations, chosen almost at random, will show that a new poet—one who can rightly bear that much and oft abused name—has risen upon the world. It contains an excess of metaphors; and one can hardly help wishing that its superabundance might be used for the illumination and enlivening of the mass of dull and dreary verse that comes every year from the pens of scores of would-be poets. Mr. Nichols is about the only one of our recent candidates for public recognition whom we are desirous and anxious to hear from again.—*The Churchman.*

It is no more conventional compliment to say that one of the finest poems of this class that has come within the range of our reading is the production of a contemporary and fellow-countryman of whose previous writings, if indeed there has been any, we are ignorant. "Monte Rosa," by Mr. Starr H. Nichols, is in truth an epic of an Alp, in which the facts and theories of science as to the operation of the forces of nature in producing and giving shape to one of the "everlasting hills" of the Pennine Alps, are clothed by the versatile fancy and vivid imagination of the author in the flowing robes of poesy, and their whole circumambient air, to filch a praise from Longfellow's "Hyperion," "is painted with the seven listed colors as from the trail of pencils." With literal fidelity, but yet with absolute freedom from abstruseness or technicality, Mr. Nichols follows the revelations of science as to the effect of heat and cold, sunshine and storm, frost and snow, wind and cloud, rain and dew, glacier and mountain stream, upon the configuration of the Alps, and in the formation of their awful chasms and stupendous precipices; and he reproduces the sublimities and beauties of Nature in a succession of pictures of rare power and delicacy, and so vividly and withal so dramatically describes the processes of the myriad centuries, that they seem to occupy a mere point of time. Successfully as this has been done by Mr. Nichols, he has blended with it a perception of the innumerable transporting sights and scenes that greet the eye of the visitant of to-day, from the sequestered village slumbering at the foot of a majestic Alp, from the vantage-ground of an inferior neighboring peak, from the duomo of some far-off city, and from various stages on its own broad bosom,

"till he stand supreme
On the sharp tip, a blunted needle's point,
And zone the world with solitary gaze."

The poem is written in heroic blank verse, whose stately measure and resonant cadences are thoroughly in unison with the grand and sublime objects of the poet; nor is it incapable in Mr. Nichols's skillful hands of those finer notes of almost Lydian softness, whose tones are fitted to scenes of engaging simplicity or of enchanting liveliness and beauty.—*Harper's Magazine*.

This poem has been praised by the critics too unreservedly. Its great beauty and freshness, its modernity of thought, its majesty of diction, and the strength which has enabled its author to triumph over the difficulties of so strange and new a subject, have blinded even watchful eyes to innumerable technical defects and evidences of careless or hasty composition. No one can read the poem without admiration, without being compelled to acknowledge genius in its author.—*The Week*.

The author might have been that poet who replied, when asked if science would not be fatal to poetry, that he was attending chemical lectures to obtain new similes; and his poem is an exposition of the methods by which science may be made to serve as the handmaid of poetic power, as it does in the poetry of Emerson. The prevailing characteristic of the poem is a certain majesty of movement—the sense it gives of being what Matthew Arnold would call "adequate;" and there is often a singular felicity in its epithets, as in the description of the "many-fingered mosses" clinging to a precipice, or of the "steep light of noon;" while sound echoes the sense, not only in the rugged lines that would have pleased Pope:—

"Names thick with consonants uncouth of sound,"

but in those almost Tennysonian in finish and music:—

“ The soft, innumerable dash
Of the sun-waves' foamless surf, in which the stone
As gently broke as break the close-sealed buds
Of dauntless violets; ”

and others equally musical; while the whole abounds with graceful figures. The poem never fails in power.—*The Critic*.

There is no story or particular plot in the poem. It may indeed be fitly characterized as one long ecstasy anent a mountain, yet displaying in its execution so keen an insight into, and sympathy with, all the sublimities and beauties of its subject, so wonderful a command and resource of language in describing them, and such perfect mastery over the difficulties of heroic verse, that the reader, carried away as by magician's spell, soon endows the mountain with all the personality of a human being, and reads on in breathless interest, as though it were the story of a life.

This much has been conclusively proven, that a new star, and that of the first magnitude, has arisen in the poetic firmament, one who, by the rugged strength and massive melody of his verse, has fully established his right to a place and a name among the celestials, and from whose ripening genius we may expect, perhaps, even nobler work in years to come.—*Halifax Citizen*.

His verses are always fluent, and it is no exaggeration to call some of them Miltonic. For example, the lines,

“ In one vast lift, and mighty bulk find heap
Of rock and earth snow-vested ”

are of such a calibre that anyone, asked at random for their origin, would be very likely to attribute them to the “ *Paradise Lost*. ”—*The American*.

There are lines as hard as rocks and as rough, but there are fine passages, a great, joyous delight in mountain scenery, and a delicate sense of beauty. Mr. Nichols's work is serious and earnest; he is not a singer of passing moods and fancies, or of pious sentiments and the sorrows of life; he has chosen an Alp for his theme, and has celebrated his favorite peak in blank verse, scientific and speculative, descriptive and enthusiastic.—*Boston Advertiser*.

The richness and interest of the poem are in the fulness and elevation of its imagery, in the thoroughness with which all the well-known phenomena of the Alps are transformed into poetic landscapes, and in the vein of philosophy concerning Nature under which the writer is subdued. There is in all parts of this brief epic to be detected a personal feeling in him, partly admiring and partly sad, which gives a grace to his language, and infuses it with sympathy. The poem is the noble effort of a strong mind. It will attract everyone who before the face of Nature was known, the helplessness of man, and his cry for a larger and better power than hers.—*Chicago Advance*.

This Epic of an Alp contains really noble passages.—*London Spectator*.

Fine are some passages which tell how the soul of man and the spirit of

Nature whisper their secrets to each other, while Earth reveals her inner meaning with entire completeness

“For him
Comes each new day a fairy prince to kiss
His lips and waken him to larger life.”

This “Epic” scintillates in jewelled thoughts.—*Chicago Tribune*.

I do not know of anybody else who has succeeded in preserving variety and interest though a grave and purely descriptive poem of any such length as this. It is the work Wordsworth failed at.—*St. Paul Pioneer*.

A finished poem, that deserves a conspicuous place in American literature.—*Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*.

